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# KINGDOMS- IN PARTNERSHIP

A study of political change in the  
British Commonwealth

BY  
C. J. M. ALPORT .



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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

"SO complex and various are the elements of literature", wrote Mr Lytton Strachey at the beginning of his essay on Lord Macaulay, "that no writer can be damned by a mere enumeration of faults." These are comfortable words—the more so, since after a catalogue of crimes of style and matter which might seem inevitably to condemn his lordship to perdition, Mr Strachey ends by setting him securely upon the upper slopes of Parnassus.

The author also has certain crimes on his conscience; for example, imperial economic problems are scarcely touched on, the Colonies and India are not mentioned at all, questions are asked and left unanswered, his debt to others for facts and ideas is barely and ungraciously acknowledged. But it is a fearful task to squeeze the history of a great Empire into a single volume, and to try to bring it up to date from the press is like climbing an eternal escalator on the downward stair.

The book was started with the object of giving a clear and readable study of the growth of the Commonwealth. As it developed, ideas which had before been hazy were clarified and new sympathies were evoked—these are set out in the final chapter. If, however, in the course of writing this book, the author has helped any one else to understand the relation of the Imperial Commonwealth to the modern world, the machinery by which it works and the spirit by which it is actuated, then he will feel himself justified for this adventure into print.

Finally, he would like to mention that for information

concerning recent developments in the Commonwealth he is principally indebted to that most excellent of periodicals, *The Round Table*, and also to thank the publishing house from which this book is issued, whose confidence in his ability to undertake this task has been a constant source of encouragement and surprise.

C. J. M. A.

ASHRIDGE

BERKHAMSTED

THE Author and the Publishers acknowledge gratefully the generous permission of Mrs Rudyard Kipling and Messrs Methuen & Company, Limited, to quote the lines from the late Rudyard Kipling's "The Native Born" (from *The Seven Seas*) which appear on page 17, and the lines from "Our Lady of the Snows" (from *The Five Nations*) which appear on page 160 of this book.

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## KINGDOMS IN PARTNERSHIP





## THE SECOND EMPIRE

TO Edward Gibbon, busy putting the finishing touches to the third volume of his history of the fall of another Empire, the year 1781 must have seemed unusually significant. With the loss of the American colonies Britain's first imperial venture was ended. All that remained were a handful of trading ports, some scattered islands, Newfoundland, and the newly conquered provinces in Canada.

"Let us examine", said the younger Pitt, "what is left with a manly and determined courage." There remained above all else the urge of the British race to expand. It was a dynamic force able to overcome any temporary set-back. The experience and failure of the first experiment in expansion had taught Great Britain a lesson which it did not forget, and the success of the second Empire was the direct consequence of the failure of the first. All that was required was a new opportunity for action, and that was not long in coming. As a result of the Napoleonic wars huge new territories were acquired. Of these the most important was the Cape of Good Hope. At the same time the activities of English adventurers in the East opened up Australasia to colonisation and development. Emigration was stimulated by the depression which followed the war and by the demobilisation of the huge armies which had fought in it.

Less than fifty years after the loss of the first Empire,

a second had sprung into being. Though most Englishmen were unaware of the fact, it was the beginning, not only of a new imperial adventure, but also of an experiment in a new sort of political association.

Besides this physical expansion, there was also an expansion of ideas. In Britain, with the passing of the 1832 Reform Act, there had begun for the ordinary Englishman a new era of political freedom. It was not long before this spread to the colonies. In 1837 a rebellion flared up in Canada as the result of the abuses of the existing system of 'representative' government, which vested power in the hands of a small but influential clique. The rising was put down with some severity, but in 1838 Lord Melbourne's ministry decided to send out a special High Commissioner to inquire into the grievances of the colonists. Lord Durham, a Liberal nobleman, who had taken a prominent part in the agitation for the Reform Bill and was a member of the progressive school of colonial theorists, was chosen for this task. He sailed for Canada in May 1838, but returned five months later as the result of the failure of the Government at home to support his action in exiling certain rebels. During that short time he had gathered sufficient understanding of the colonists' point of view to see that there was only one way in which a repetition of the American revolution could be stopped. His recommendations were contained in the report which he submitted to the British Government in January 1839.

Lord Durham saw that though the membership of a great Empire was a privilege which the colonists valued, the fact that they had little share in its government and scarcely any control over their own affairs, gave them a feeling of 'remote dependence' and bitter dissatisfaction. His plan for constitutional reform, which was put into

effect by Lord Elgin (Governor of Canada, 1846-54) began a new stage in the development of the Empire. Before this, the government of the colony had been carried out by an imperial governor acting on the advice of a council chosen by himself from any group of individuals in whom he had confidence. This council, which corresponded to the Cabinet, had no real responsibility to the legislature elected by the colonists. Moreover, the ultimate decision in all matters lay in the hands of the governor himself. Lord Durham's plan was to make the colonial constitutions similar to the British. He saw that all the advantages of popular control on the one hand, and the choice of ministers by the Crown on the other, might be obtained if the governor had instructions to select his council from that party, which could command a majority in the legislature.

It is true that Lord Durham did not intend that all subjects should be thus transferred to the control of the colonial electorates,<sup>1</sup> but his recommendation was a great constitutional advance. If the same thing had been done in the case of the other American colonies sixty years before, the War of Independence might have been averted. In fact, it was nothing more than responsible government of this type which Jefferson and his friends had demanded in the Olive Branch Petition of 1775.

The attitude to the colonies of men like Durham, Bulwer Lytton and the other progressives, was not shared by the mass of the nation. That Durham's plan was carried into effect was due to the enterprise of individual governors and not to the impetus of popular

<sup>1</sup> He advised the Imperial Government to retain control over foreign policy, commercial policy (tariffs, etc.), defence, matters relating to alterations in colonial constitutions, and the alienation of Crown lands. This last, however, was relinquished in the 1840's.

support. In fact, the attitude of the majority of Englishmen was one of bland indifference. The disillusionment, which had resulted from the shattered dream of the first Empire, lingered among those classes which had before 1780 taken most interest in imperial affairs. England was herself in the throes of a revolution. The new onslaught of liberalism in politics and economics was occupying the whole of its attention and energies. Apart from supplying a constant flow of emigrants, the nation took little interest in the political struggles overseas.

The Industrial Revolution, however, gave a new impetus to expansion. The mounting production of the English factories created a need for markets. The older companies like the East India Company and Hudson's Bay Company were joined by a host of others which carried trade to any part of the world where there were people to buy. This economic imperialism was very much like that of the U.S.A. to-day. High-pressure selling, the willingness to take big risks, and bitter competition were its chief characteristics.

It had also a different and more ugly side. It might conceivably be argued that to sell cheap Western manufactures to the Oriental was to confer a benefit upon him, but no one can say that the forcible imposition of the opium habit upon millions of Chinese in opposition to the direct wishes of their government was little less than a crime. Yet such was the effect of the Opium War of 1839-42, for which the Liberal Free Traders with their doctrine of *laissez-faire* were directly responsible. The Manchester School, so exercised about the suppression of the slave trade abroad, cared as little for the creation of drug-slaves in China as it did for the industrial slaves in its own factories.

This was but one of the long series of injuries to native populations for which economic Whiggery must bear the guilt. While it encouraged the activities of commercial interests, time and again it refused to make the least effort to control them. It was not until the very end of the century, when Lord Rosebery led the Liberal Party, that it developed any real sense of its political duties where native races were concerned.

In this burst of expansion the colonies played little part. The search for markets was mainly confined to those regions where large populations already existed. The tiny settlements recently planted in Australia and New Zealand, and even the rather larger communities in South Africa and Canada, offered little scope for big profits. At that time the value of these colonies as sources of raw materials was not yet properly realised. They appeared to have little merit except as dumps for surplus population. If the attitude of the public was not quite so aggressively class-conscious as that of Mr Bertrand Russell, who claims "that the Empire has been the cess-pool for British moral refuse", still it had seen a host of discontented or unfortunate emigrants leaving England to try their luck in the new lands. It seemed impossible that these elements should ever shake down to become a loyal population overseas.

Nor was this attitude confined to the general public. One Permanent Secretary to the Colonial Office spoke of Canada in 1863 as "a Colony which is no good to us and has no care for us"; while another public man considered that the future development of the Empire would at best lead to an "eventual parting company on good terms". England, in fact, gave herself up to enjoy the rich comfort of mid-Victorian prosperity upon which the Empire

seemed to be little more than a drag; there were not a few who would have been glad to see it cut adrift from the Mother Country, lest it should hamper the full development of British interests.

While Parliament and people at home remained indifferent, the colonies themselves were slowly making progress. In 1856 and 1852 responsible government was extended to Australia and New Zealand, while in 1857 Canada, by asserting her right to impose tariffs against Great Britain, for the first time assumed control of her own commercial policy.

Simultaneously, the discovery of gold in British Columbia and Australia in the 1850's, and diamonds in South Africa in 1867, gave British commercial interests a taste of greater wealth to come. Besides, the growth of the New Zealand wool trade and the Canadian timber and mineral exports were attracting attention to those countries. Though they did not offer to the manufacturer prospects of huge markets as was the case in Asia, they promised him a new and apparently inexhaustible supply of raw materials. The ugly ducklings had taken to laying golden eggs and appeared to be likely to continue doing so for some time to come. The British industrialist was interested.

There were other forces also at work to rouse the nation as a whole from its mood of apathy.

The great phase of emigration began to have its effect.<sup>1</sup> Just as the Empire was becoming more democratic overseas, it was becoming more popular at home. Families in remote villages all over the country became aware that

<sup>1</sup> Figures. 1815: 2,081 people left the British Isles.  
 1819: 35,787 " "  
 1832: 103,140 " "  
 1847-67: 4,632,129 "

their interests in the colonies were near and personal. Sons and daughters, who had gone abroad to try their luck in Australia or Canada, wrote home of the new life they had found in those countries. Events which occurred on the other side of the world became as familiar as those in the next market town. Speedier communications contributed to this change. Before 1840 it took close on a month to cross the Atlantic; by 1860 it took little over ten days. By 1872 direct telegraphic communication had been established between London and Adelaide, and this brought Australia within a few hours of home.

From this point (round about 1870) a new tendency in the relations between Great Britain and her white colonies appeared. Up to that time the gradual disintegration of the Empire seemed certain. Now, as a reaction, came a movement towards a greater unity. The confederation of the provinces of British North America in 1867 was a symptom of this. Even in Great Britain there existed, after 1884, a Federation League which was formed to promote in a rather vague way, some sort of closer imperial co-operation, with the slogan "federation or disintegration".

Besides this, an imperial policy became part of the programme of a party in the British Parliament for the first time for a hundred years. Disraeli and the Tories proclaimed that they stood for the maintenance of the imperial connection, and there were groups of statesmen both at home and abroad, who began to see that the Empire might play an important part in leading the world to a more advanced type of international association. Others besides Cecil Rhodes believed that in time it might become "so great a power as hereafter to render wars impossible and to promote the best interests of mankind".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rhodes's first will, 1877.



The nation, now that it had become conscious of itself, was a little bewildered by the magnitude of its achievement. It found that its territory, influence and responsibilities had spread across continents and oceans almost without its knowledge. Its officials and soldiers were entrusted with the welfare and good government of millions of people. Every year added new possessions to the Crown. The urge to expand, which had governed its activities and absorbed its energies for two centuries, was not yet exhausted. But though the statistics of its export trade might show the extent of one aspect of this expansion, it was the spread of English methods of government which really mattered. The ideas of co-operation and toleration, the secret of combining freedom with unity of purpose, the principles of representative democracy taught to nations who had never known anything but turmoil and tyranny, were the real achievements of British imperial expansion. It may be that the true value of these will not be realised until centuries have passed—and we with them.

A modern German writer, Johannes Stoye, has gone to some length to analyse our national character with the object of discovering the origin of these ideas. The insular position of Great Britain, he argues, has produced in the English people an instinct for mutual co-operation. Their immunity from invasion during those centuries when the rest of the Continent was engaged in constant struggle, combined with the Puritan idea which identified the English race with the 'chosen people', gave them their insufferable superiority-complex. He discourses at some length upon the effects of climate (fog, rain, etc.) and racial admixture on our national character. It is only when he turns to investigate the philosophy by which we

are guided that he is forced to admit defeat. The Englishman, considering himself part of the organic world of nature, depending for guidance upon experience and instinct, follows a path entirely different from that of the logical Frenchman or the passionate Spaniard. Herr Stoye ends on a note of thinly veiled disgust—"the Englishman", he says, "finds his way about politics like a dog and not a human being".

Racial introversion has never been a vice of the British people. We seldom turn aside to ask ourselves searching questions as to why we perform such and such an action or take such and such a course. Few Englishmen, even if they are sufficiently articulate, can explain the nature of their philosophy of life. Theories, except to golfers, make little appeal. Abstract ideas appear useful only when they are practicable. Our philosophers are generally employed in explaining away some incident of the past rather than in evolving some rule of conduct for the future. Even so, men like Hobbes and Locke had more influence abroad than they ever had at home.

If we have any national philosophy it is the belief in action. Faced with a particular set of circumstances, the Englishman acts as common sense and instinct dictate. While a Frenchman and an Italian might sit down and reason a problem out, the Englishman instinctively takes measures which appear at the moment most likely to provide a solution to it. At its worst this takes the form of 'muddling through': at its best it leads to actions as brilliant in conception as in execution.

The British Empire is the product of this attitude of mind. Its illogicalities are the result of a philosophy which never pretended to be logical. Its explanation is to be found in the ideas and character of a small island race

which Providence equipped with the capacity to act while others still were dreaming.

Though one may essay an explanation of the forces which gave the Empire its peculiar character, no one has yet explained that urge which brought it into being. What is the force which causes races to seek other outlets for their energies and to find new places in which to live? What carried the Roman legions to the ends of the ancient world, or drove the Norse ships across the seas, or brought the Turks to the gates of Vienna? Neither economic pressure nor the personal ambition of some prince can explain it. Such a desire to expand arises from some dynamic force within the nation itself. The results of this expansion depend upon the character of each individual race. In the case of the Goths and the Turks, expansion meant mere conquest. They carried with them nothing except brute strength. They left behind them nothing except the memory of oppression and violence. Rome, too, conquered an empire but also founded a civilisation. She carried abroad the twin conceptions of law and citizenship. The physical effects of her conquests passed away centuries ago, yet her ideas still influence civilisation and her mark is on the modern world to-day.

The chief problem which we are now facing in Great Britain is whether that force of expansion has died out, or whether it still remains, though the direction and methods have changed. One thing is certain—whatever may happen to the Commonwealth, the ideas which we have evolved will influence the actions of men for centuries to come.

## THE NEW IMPERIALISM

IN 1883 Sir John Seeley published a series of discourses which he had delivered at Cambridge, under the title of *The Expansion of England*. This is one of the few collections of university lectures which have turned out to be best-sellers. In it he traced the growth of the British colonies. He argued that each settlement was part of a Greater Britain. English men and women who went abroad were not lost to the motherland. The future pointed, not to an eventual separation as soon as each colony was able to defend its independence, but on the contrary, to a closer unity.

Few people, outside the Federation League and a small circle of statesmen, had any conception of how this was to be brought about. The new imperialism still consisted of a rather vague feeling of satisfaction tempered by an almost complete absence of any idea as to what was to happen next. As far as the Empire was concerned, public opinion could be roughly divided into three sections. There were those who spoke in enraptured tones of 'our Empire'. They assumed a proprietary attitude towards the colonies, and were apt to throw their weight about if they came across any colonials on a visit home. They professed to find in the healthy nationalism which was springing up overseas, signs of active disloyalty, and, in general, their attitude was the cause of bitterness, the dregs of which remain to this day.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE NEW IMPERIALISM

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Another section held that the Empire was a 'crime against humanity'. These, as often as not, claimed to speak in the name of religion. While they protested indignantly against the assumption by Great Britain of responsibility for the political welfare of native territories, they had little objection to the commercial exploitation of Africa and the East. Their constant outcries, now directed against governments, now against individuals, provide a undertone for the louder clashes which marked the closing years of the nineteenth century.

To the vast majority of Englishmen, however, both Liberals and Tories, imperialism meant something different. If many saw in the expansion of the British people the guiding hand of Providence, there were others who looked on the Empire as a gigantic organism of natural growth. They were conscious of the existence of some mysterious force which caused the expansion of the race; they were proud of its achievements; they were also alive to its responsibilities. Public opinion kept an increasingly strict eye on the activities of the big trading companies which had dealings with primitive nations. If, in spite of this, exploitation still continued, if motives of self-interest too often interposed and if mistakes were made, yet the standard which the nation set itself was high and its achievement by no means inadequate.

During the whole of the last quarter of the nineteenth century the partition of Africa held chief place in the public mind and, with the possible exception of Ireland, absorbed the greater part of the nation's energies. Commercial interests, feeling for some new outlet for their products, turned to the unknown and undeveloped territories of that enigmatic continent. The Royal Niger Company in the west, the British South African Company

beyond the Zambezi, the Nyasa and Imperial British East African Companies in the east, started from their several jumping-off points upon a rather unsystematic opening-up of Central Africa. In the north, the occupation of Egypt, and later of the Sudan, completed British encirclement of the continent.

It is chiefly because of the activities of these companies that attacks on imperialism in general, and the British variety in particular, are so fierce. Emissaries of civilisation too often came in the guise of travellers in gin and arms. Natives were apt to exchange slavery to Arabs for slavery of a more modern, but no less injurious, form in factories and mines. Missionary influence tended to destroy old traditional loyalties and standards, and put nothing in their place. Cecil Rhodes's "philanthropy plus five per cent" showed clearly enough that however high a man's idealism might soar, its practical effects left much to be desired, if it was tethered to the prevailing motives of company returns.

As has usually been the rule, in Africa the flag followed trade. The companies were compelled to protect their interests in various regions. The B.S.A. Co. recruited its police; Captain Lugard was dispatched by the Imperial British East African Company with a small detachment of native troops to guarantee the peace of Uganda and to secure "a control of all white affairs" in that country. Gradually the resources of these companies became too small to fulfil the responsibilities of administration which they had been forced to assume. When, in 1892, the I.B.E.A. Co. decided to withdraw from Uganda, public opinion at home compelled the Government to take over control, and in 1894 it was proclaimed a British protectorate. A similar step was taken in the



case of the rest of East Africa in 1896 and of Nigeria in 1900.

The principal danger which arose from this expansion was due to the constant conflict between British interests and those of other European powers. Time and time again England was brought to the edge of war—now with France, now Germany, now Russia. Incidents succeeded each other with startling rapidity until, after the Jameson Raid, 1895, England found herself almost entirely isolated in Europe. The Kaiser, feeling that an opportunity to do 'something important' was at hand, suggested that those powers on the Continent which wanted anything from England (and all of them did) should unite to force her to disgorge. This suggestion was received with more sympathy in France than was healthy from our point of view, and England was shown graphically the danger of Lord Salisbury's policy of isolation.

Again, in 1898, at Fashoda, Great Britain's dream of an imperial highway from Cairo to the Cape came up against the French vision of an Empire stretching from the Atlantic to the Red Sea. Once more, there appeared every prospect of war. Though again nothing happened, anglophobia had reached a dangerous pitch on the Continent. More especially as Great Britain was in a few months to find that a small affair like the Boer War was an alarming tax on her resources. When that war did actually break out, it seemed quite possible that Germany would intervene on behalf of the Republics. There is a document in the Cape archives in which the Kaiser promised to do so. As it was, German and British papers indulged in mutual blackguarding not unlike the Russo-German fracas of November 1936. At that time, it should incidentally be remembered, the skins of European

governments were considerably thinner than they are to-day.

The effect of this threat upon the Empire was to draw it closer together. The Diamond Jubilee, which the Queen desired to be a quiet domestic affair, became, under the energetic influence of Joseph Chamberlain, a gesture of solidarity to the rest of Europe. The numbers and variety of the colonial military detachments, the emphatic assurances of loyalty given by the overseas prime ministers, the tremendous enthusiasm which the event aroused in the colonies, showed would-be aggressors that a new sense of unity had arisen in the Empire which was different from anything that had existed before.

While successive Imperial Governments were engaged in the high diplomacy which was fashionable at that time, the self-governing colonies were gathering influence and experience.

In 1872 responsible government was extended to Cape Colony, and in 1893 to Natal. Gradually the remainder of the five powers, which, on the recommendation of Lord Durham, had been reserved by the Imperial Government, were transferred to the control of the colonies themselves. Two of these—land and commercial policy—have been mentioned already. The next to go was responsibility for local defence.

The principle which the British Government laid down was that where it paid for any service, it must retain control of its administration. In the case of imperial defence, while Great Britain provided the troops, she insisted on her right to say how they were to be used. The colonial governments, on the other hand, felt that

self-government without self-defence was a mere illusion. After 1868 imperial garrisons were gradually withdrawn. As a result each colony became responsible for its own protection.

For all practical purposes, however, before any conceivable hostile power could enter the frontiers of a colony, it would have to cross the sea and would be brought into conflict with the British Navy. Thus the main responsibility for imperial security remained on Great Britain's shoulders. But the fact that the colonies had now control over their own defences gave them a pleasant feeling of self-reliance and, moreover, saved the British exchequer large sums of money each year.

In 1900, by the passing of the Constitution Act of that year, the Australian states were united in a Commonwealth. The chief feature of that Act was the power given to the Dominion to alter its Constitution by means of a referendum without reference to the Imperial Parliament. Thus another of the reserved subjects passed under the control of an overseas community. By the beginning of the new century only foreign policy remained exclusively in the hands of Great Britain.

Alongside of this constitutional growth came a development of colonial nationalism. New nations were arising in Australia, Canada, and Africa, which were neither English nor Scottish. They were the second and third generations—the native-born. Their knowledge of Britain was merely second-hand, and though they called it 'home', their homes were really on the shores of the Pacific, or in remote dorps in the Karroo, or among the plains and pastures of Manitoba and New South Wales. Affection for the Motherland, mingled with pride in the institutions of their own countries, and a mounting self-confidence in

the promise of the future, created twin loyalties which many people at home failed properly to understand. When, therefore, Cecil Rhodes spoke of keeping out the 'imperial factor', his remark was featured in the English papers as proving his disloyalty, and it was several years before he was able to live down the reputation so acquired. Kipling has caught these new emotions in the verse which goes :

We've drunk to the Queen—God bless her !  
We've drunk to our mother's land;  
We've drunk to our English brother,  
(But he does not understand);  
We've drunk to the wide creation,  
And the Cross swings low for the morn,  
Last toast and of Obligation—  
A health to the Native-born !

As a contrast to this development, which appeared superficially to lead towards separation, was the new movement towards unity.

Lord Rosebery had once stated that federation was impossible. At the same time Seeley published his book, which provided for the public a new interpretation of imperial relations, and two years later Sir Julius Vogel, a New Zealand statesman, submitted to the Secretary of State for the Colonies "A Memorandum on the Federation of the British Empire". This last was highly impracticable, consisting as it did of the proposal that colonial representatives should be elected to the House of Commons, but it was significant of a new trend of opinion. In 1887 the first Colonial Conference was held on the occasion of the Jubilee, and for the first time the heads of the various British governments were able to discuss the problems with which they were all faced. In 1894, at the Ottawa Conference, the colonies proposed a

system of Imperial Preference, and though Great Britain was unwilling to throw over her Free Trade policy, certain concessions were made. In 1897 Canada reduced her tariffs on British imports by one-eighth of the general tariff, and later, in 1900, to one-third. Great Britain returned the compliment by denouncing a number of her treaties with foreign countries and by giving Canada certain preferences in the English market.

The tide of unity was flowing strongly. We have seen how the Queen's Diamond Jubilee was used, in Mr Chamberlain's words, "to show to all the world the strength, the power, the resources, and the loyalty of the British Empire". At the Colonial Conference which took place simultaneously, he improved the occasion by making certain proposals as to how this unity and strength might be increased. The idea of federation, he said in his address to the premiers, was in the air. Some time must elapse before it could become a reality, but he had certain proposals to make which would tend towards that end. He suggested a scheme for giving the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council a more imperialistic character, and proposed that the conference should agree to a mild form of imperial preference and to some system of imperial defence.

It was lucky that, at the moment when imperial unity was becoming practical politics, a man like Joseph Chamberlain should have appeared at the Colonial Office. His arrival had been like a gust of clean air in a stuffy room. For years the ineptitude of that department had been a scandal. A series of permanent under-secretaries had virtually governed the Empire behind the backs of ministers, whose interest in the colonies was small and whose knowledge of their problems almost non-existent.

Mr Chamberlain altered all this. During the years he held the Secretaryship, few colonial officials returned from leave without having had an interview with him, and without gaining the impression that here was at last a man who had the interests of the colonies at heart. As his speeches showed, his imperialism was wider and deeper than that of most of his colleagues. His appeal, in his Albert Hall speech, to his audience to 'think imperially', and his statement that our rule "can only be justified if we can show that it adds to the happiness and prosperity of the people living under it", show that, for all his hardness of character, there have been few braver or more accurate interpreters of imperialism to the people of Great Britain.

### CHAPTER III

## THE CHALLENGE

**H**ISTORY is pre-eminently an untidy science. Movements and institutions linger on long after they have lost their purpose. New ones begin before the time is ripe. Events that belong to one era get unexpectedly mixed with others which are part of the next. Shakespeare, the great Elizabethan, writes his best plays in the reign of James I; the Industrial Revolution sprawls over two and a half centuries; Dante composed a theme for the Middle Ages long after they were dead. Time, the one dimension of history, seems unable to form an even pattern with incident, which is the other.

The end of a reign, an era, and a century, all within the space of eighteen months, was therefore an unusual affair. The spirit of Victorianism followed the little Queen to her grave. She had so long been the symbol of her times, that it was natural that they should die with her. G. M. Young reminds us that the sorrow at her passing was mingled with a sense of relief. England was ready for a change. It was clear to every one that the new King's reign would differ from his mother's as widely as his character differed from hers. That he called himself Edward instead of Albert, was itself a conscious break with the immediate past.

Moreover, problems which had been pushed into the background while the Queen still lived, began to jostle more urgently for attention. Already the question of

British domination in South Africa was being settled by war. A few months before the Queen's death, the Kaiser and von Tirpitz had introduced their second Navy Bill, which indicated for the first time Germany's intention to challenge Great Britain at sea. Negotiations for an alliance between the latter and Japan were begun during the early months of 1901. The publication of the Anglo-Japanese treaty a year later was the announcement of the Government's decision to descend from its pedestal of isolation into the no less dangerous arena of foreign entanglements. Such a decision was bound to have its effect upon the future of every part of the Empire.

Imperialism, too, had suffered a change. Although a few progressive thinkers like Chamberlain had seen that dominion also meant trusteeship, for the majority of the people it had become tainted with the jingoism aroused by the Anglo-German rivalry. Moreover the successes of the past ten years in Africa and the East had turned the nation's head. It took the defeats and disasters of the Boer War to sober it down. The nation came out of that struggle like a drunken man who has plunged his head in icy water. Complacence and jingoism both were washed away. The inefficiency of the Army was realised; so was the great value of the Colonies as reservoirs of man-power and raw materials at a time of emergency. Above all, the risks of imperial expansion were brought home to the British public with unmistakable force.

In spite of the tenacity of the Dutch, the outcome of the war had always been obvious. The real question was, not whether the British forces would win, but what was to happen after the Boer Republics had been beaten. A settlement must be arrived at which would make it possible for South Africa, whether as federation or union



to fit into the Empire. The terms of the treaty of Vereeniging, by which among other things Great Britain promised to pay the enemy's war debts, showed a mutual tolerance which was a contrast to the bitterness displayed during the fight. Joseph Chamberlain in his speeches, both in South Africa in 1902 and after his return home, gave proof of the same wise spirit of conciliation. When the Liberal Party came into power in 1905 this policy was carried further. In 1906 responsible government was granted to the Transvaal and in 1907 to the Orange Free State. Three years later, all four provinces were joined as a self-governing dominion, over which the Dutch, as forming the majority of the white population, were certain to have control. Never has magnanimity in politics been proved to be greater wisdom. It was a triumph shared by both parties at home and by both races in the Union. South Africa's place in the Commonwealth was assured. Within ten years of the end of the Boer War, General Botha, one of the most successful of the Dutch generals, was taking part in an Imperial Conference as the representative of the Empire's newest Dominion. Four years later he was leading an imperial force against Germany, the old patron of the Boer Republics.

The Unionist Government, which had not distinguished itself in the conduct of the war, remained in power until 1905. In 1902 Lord Salisbury slipped quietly away during the excitement of King Edward's coronation, and Mr Balfour succeeded him as Prime Minister. Though the Tory Party still had a handsome majority in the House, its position was uneasy, to say the least. Not only had it been unsuccessful in its war administration, but it seemed to have no intention of introducing the social reforms which in the eyes of many were already

long overdue. The forces of liberalism were massing against it and the public noted that the new King was on familiar terms with the radical leaders.

Simultaneously, the Tory Party split itself upon the rock of Tariff Reform. In 1903 Joseph Chamberlain resigned from the Cabinet to undertake a giant campaign in favour of Imperial Preference, while Balfour was left to keep the party in power, until such a time as Chamberlain should have thoroughly prepared the public for the acceptance of the new doctrine.

The Imperial Preference movement had begun in the Dominions. They had early forsaken Free Trade, principally with the object of sheltering their stripling industries. Though different conditions existed overseas from those in Great Britain, they saw no reason why the policy which suited them should not also suit her. They failed to realise that Great Britain's imports were principally food and raw materials, while those of the Dominions were manufactured goods. Moreover, the bulk of Britain's trade was with countries outside the Empire. Imperial Preference would be certain to injure these interests. Apart from consideration of imperial unity, the Mother Country had little to gain by the proposed scheme for a Zollverein of the Empire.

Mr Chamberlain embraced the Tariff Reform faith from motives which were political rather than economic. He felt that the time had come to draw the bonds of Empire tighter, and the economic bond seemed the most suitable for the purpose. It was not purely a materialistic conception. In a speech of Mr Deakin, the Australian Prime Minister, it is almost elevated into an ideal. Each part of the Empire, he said, must first consider the question in relation to its own interests. But at the same time

it must remember the effect which economic co-operation would have on the future of the Empire and eventually on the world. "We are never blind to the fact", he continued, "that closer relations of this kind might play a most important part in ways far too numerous to mention, not only in bringing us together, but in keeping us together and making us stronger by union for national business bargains. Certainly we shall then be better equipped for making those bargains which nations from time to time enter into, in order to preserve the peace of the world." There is, in this last sentence, an echo of Cecil Rhodes's youthful dream.

Before Mr Chamberlain had sailed for South Africa in 1902 the Cabinet had agreed that the tax which had been put on imported wheat under pressure of the war should be used to give a preference to Canadian growers. On his return, however, he found that the Free Traders in the Government had prevailed and Ritchie, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, had repealed the whole of the duty behind his back. Earlier, at the 1902 Coronation Conference, the Colonial Secretary had been forced with the greatest reluctance to refuse Sir Wilfrid Laurier's preference proposals. These two reversals stiffened Chamberlain's attitude. After his resignation he flung himself with astonishing vigour into the campaign. If his economic theories were obscure, and frequently quite erroneous, he met with considerable success, especially in his own strongholds in the Midlands. Unfortunately Balfour was unable to maintain himself in power long enough to enable Chamberlain thoroughly to do his work.

For the last three years Balfour had been giving a display of political gymnastics of no ordinary variety. The task of maintaining unity between the Free Traders and

Tariff Reformers in his own party, in the face of a Free Trade opposition, was a difficult one. It was only accomplished by such subterfuges as that of leading the whole of his supporters from the House when the question of Free Trade was to be debated, leaving the Liberals to carry motions in its favour *nemine contradicente* and *ad nauseam*.

By the autumn of 1905 other questions of an equally pressing nature had been added to that of Tariff Reform. In December the Government broke before the storm. At the election which followed, Mr Chamberlain and his lieutenants toured the country in a frantic attempt to arouse the electorate, while Mr Lloyd George and the Liberal speakers flourished loaves of bread in the faces of their audiences to show how their opponents intended to reduce the size of the worker's loaf. Inevitably the Tories were badly beaten.

Though the question was discussed at the 1907 Imperial Conference, Preference had to wait twenty-five years before it again found a place in national politics. If it is true that the Ottawa Agreements saw Joseph Chamberlain's dream come true, it was a sorry fulfilment of what had seemed to him a great and worthy cause.

For the next eight years the principal question which the British and Dominion Governments had to face was that of defence. The German Navy Bill of 1900 was followed by a series of others which left no doubts in the minds of observers that the Reich was aiming at parity with Britain. The Kaiser had read Admiral Mahan's work on 'Sea Power' to good purpose: Empire, the American had written, was the reward of naval supremacy. The Emperor's path was clear; he wanted an Empire, he must, therefore, have sea-power. From 1900 onwards his

policy dominated the international relations of the whole world.

The reaction of Great Britain to this took two directions; the first was to seek an ally in Europe and the second was to look to the defence of the Empire. An ally was not hard to find. France, too, saw herself menaced by German armaments. Mutual fears quickly dispelled old antagonisms. The tact and *bonhomie* of King Edward did the rest. Various colonial disputes were settled by a process of give and take. British interests in Egypt were recognised by the French, in return for the recognition of the latter's interests in Morocco. In the beginning of 1905 Britain and France appeared in the somewhat unusual rôles of bosom friends. The Kaiser and his ministers, Bülow and Holstein, had an unpleasant feeling that something had gone wrong with their *Realpolitik*.

The Liberal Government when it came into power carried this policy of alliance still farther. Edward Grey permitted conversations between the British and French general staffs, though he refused to give any definite assurance that Britain would support France if Germany marched against her. 'At the same time tentative negotiations were begun for an understanding with Russia. The latter had just been defeated by Britain's new ally, Japan, who had challenged Russia largely on the strength of the protection which the British agreement afforded her. In spite of this, the fact that she was now a friend of France made Russia look more favourably upon a *rapprochement* with Britain than might otherwise have seemed likely. Indeed, faced with the task of having to decide between a German and the French alliance, the Tsar and his ministers chose the latter. If this entailed, besides other things, a settlement with Britain and the

surrender of certain long-standing ambitions in Central Asia, it seemed at any rate preferable to being tied to 'Willy's' chariot wheel for the years to come.

The British Government were entirely satisfied with this plan. The Russian threat to India had long caused successive administrations considerable anxiety. The melodramatic activities of the Tsar's agents throughout the lands between Teheran and Lhasa had offered plenty of scope for the British Secret Service, besides providing countless plots for those novels of diplomatic high life and intrigue which are so acceptable to the romantically minded public. The same process of give and take was used as had been found so successful in the case of the French *entente*. On the 31st of August 1907 the convention was signed.

The Anglo-Franco-Russian alignment thus reached was to last until the beginning of the Great War.

Throughout this process of tearing traditional British policy up by the roots, the Dominions were not consulted. Foreign affairs were still mainly the monopoly of the Imperial Government, and while the Mother Country provided 99 per cent of the Empire's military strength, this was likely to remain so. Even in the case of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement, 1902, which governed the situation in the Pacific and made it possible for Australia to continue her 'White Australia' policy unimpeded, the Commonwealth was not informed that negotiations were in progress until after the convention had been signed. The same applied to the *approchements* with France and Russia. True, it appeared on the surface that these only involved Great Britain, but the world knew that the choice which the Mother Country had made must affect the future of the whole Empire. The post-War maxim

of no obligation without participation had not yet become a rule.

The Dominions were only interested in the conduct of foreign affairs in their own particular regions of the world. For the most part Great Britain had been careless in dealing with questions which seemed insignificant beside the absorbing problem of peace and war in Europe. Australia had been annoyed by the British concessions to the French in the New Hebrides; the casual way in which the Mother Country had watched the German penetration of Samoa irritated New Zealand; Canada was disgruntled at the decision of the British chairman of the Arbitration Committee on the Alaskan Boundary dispute; Dominion statesmen, like Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Mr Deakin, and Mr Seddon, went out of their way to impress upon the Government at home that this sort of thing would not do. At the Imperial Conference of 1911, the British ministers recognised the right of the Dominions to be consulted on all matters that concerned them. It was agreed that when the agenda of the projected Hague Conference was drawn up, they should be invited to make suggestions. As far as the Declaration of London,<sup>1</sup> which the Imperial Government had signed without consulting any other member of the Empire, was concerned, the British ministers argued that it originated with the Hague Conference, 1907, at which the Dominions had not been represented. Therefore they had no right to sign the Declaration.

In spite of all this when, during the few days before the War, the Imperial Cabinet was making up its mind whether or not it was going to fight Germany should the

<sup>1</sup> The object of this was to restate the rights of neutral ships in the event of a blockade.

latter advance through Belgium, no real attempt was made to consult the Dominions. It is true that before the ultimatum was dispatched, assurances had been received from governments overseas that they would support Great Britain in the fulfilment of its treaty obligations. The important point is, however, that Sir Edward Grey and the Imperial Cabinet felt themselves under no obligation to consult any other part of the Empire before they declared war on its behalf. It was the last and greatest decision which the Mother Country made alone.

. . . . .

Foreign policy and defence have always been closely allied, for the ultimate weapon of diplomacy is war. Although the Dominions had become responsible for local defence by 1887, the protection of imperial communications remained in the hands of the British Navy, the whole burden of the expense for which rested on the shoulders of the taxpayers in Great Britain. As early as 1897 Chamberlain had tried to persuade the Colonial prime ministers to agree to some comprehensive plan of imperial defence, but without any great success. The only contributions made by the Dominions at that time were trifling ones—ranging from £169,000 from Australia to £12,000 from Natal.

This situation might have continued had it not been for two events. First, the German Navy Bills carried with them a threat not only to Great Britain, but to the Dominions as well. Secondly, the surging tide of nationalism in those countries, which had led to new aspirations in the realms of foreign policy, also led to a desire for greater participation in the naval defence of the Empire. The Dominions felt that while they had no



voice in foreign policy, they were under no obligation to contribute to imperial defence beyond the bare necessities of internal law and order. Similarly, while they had no considerable military force, the British Government did not feel itself obliged to allow the Dominions a share in the direction of foreign policy.

After 1900, however, the whole situation was changed. Britain wanted a bigger navy and the Dominions wanted a share of the control over imperial foreign affairs. Logically the two things went together. The only difficulty was how exactly co-operation in these spheres was to be arranged.

In 1902 the Admiralty submitted a memorandum to the Imperial Conference which, besides containing a number of erudite allusions to the battles of Salamis and Lepanto, pointed out that the chief feature of naval strategy was the attack and destruction of the mass of the enemies' fleet by the concentrated force of one's own navy. This being so, any possible enemy of Great Britain would try to prevent a concentration of the British Grand Fleet by threatening distant points on her trade-routes. In order to deal with these threats the Admiralty strongly advised that "there should be a single navy under one control by which means alone concerted action between the several parts can be assured". In contrast to this the Dominions wished to establish separate naval units, manned, maintained, and controlled by themselves. The Australians argued perfectly reasonably that the sooner they developed their own sea tradition the better for all concerned. Drake's drum echoed but faintly on Pacific shores, and the only way in which they could ever hope to create that tradition was through the medium of an all-Australian navy.

In spite of the difference of opinion as to how imperial co-operation in naval defence should be organised, there was no real disagreement as to its necessity. Great Britain herself, with her eye on Germany, was struggling to maintain her 60 per cent preponderance over any other country. Although the Liberal Government had on its entry into power in 1905 reduced the rate of naval construction as evidence of its pacifist intentions, it soon found that this philanthropic gesture had no effect on Continental opinion, and it was forced to undertake a new and more energetic programme of battleship building. In 1909 it decided to lay down eight dreadnoughts in reply to the four begun by the Germans after the enactment of the Naval Law of the previous year.

In 1907 Mr Haldane, the War Minister, introduced his scheme for reorganising the Army. An expeditionary force was to be prepared for instant dispatch abroad. The Volunteers were to become a second line of defence, ready if the necessity arose to supplement regular battalions. They were, as *The Times* correspondent rather unkindly put it, to be real soldiers instead of just playing at them.

In the case of the Dominions it was eventually decided at the 1909 Naval Conference that Canada and Australia should have the right to establish separate navies which were eventually to take the place of the British units in their particular waters. South Africa and New Zealand continued to make money contributions: the latter also presented a battleship to the Imperial Navy, which was to serve on the Pacific Station.

The measures which the Canadians took, or rather did not take, were largely governed by domestic politics. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's Liberal Government passed, in 1910, a

Naval Services Act which resulted in the purchase of two cruisers for training the personnel of the embryo Canadian Navy. Two years later, when Sir Robert Borden's Conservative Government came into power, a Bill was introduced by which Canada was to supply a quota of warships for the Imperial Navy. The Conservatives felt that this would be more effective than attempting to create a navy of their own. The Bill was defeated by a Liberal Senate. The result was that Canadian naval policy fell between two stools and by the beginning of the war practically nothing had been done in the way of naval defence.

In Australia, however, a squadron had been constructed and manned with the help of the British Admiralty. Although comparatively small, it proved of great value during the War when control of it was transferred to the Imperial Government.

The shadow of the impending conflict, which was slipping across the face of Europe during these years and which was the cause of these great armaments, darkened even the most distant parts of the Empire. In Capetown, for instance, it was well known that the grossly over-staffed German consulate was in touch with the mal-content elements in the Union. Although men's minds were on events in Europe, though diplomats kept an anxious eye on the conflict of Russian and Austrian ambitions in the Balkans, and soldiers speculated on the route which the Germans intended to take when they invaded France, the public had spent too long watching the mounting naval expenditure of both Germany and Great Britain not to realise the true point of danger.

It was not in a jingoist imperialistic spirit that Great Britain entered the competition with the Reich. After

1900 the popular conception of the meaning of imperialism was widening. The phrase 'The White Man's burden', which has become a valuable source of raw material for the music-hall stage, represented the developed sense of imperial responsibilities. Great Britain stood as the trustee for the native races. Her duties were perfectly clear. She had undertaken to maintain peace; to educate the backward populations in the standards and ideas which are the basis of British civilisation; to improve the health and economic conditions of the people; finally, to prevent unfair exploitation by commercial interests. Perhaps the passage from the speech of the late Lord Curzon, which Mr Nicolson quotes in his biography of the statesman, gives as clear a conception as any of the attitude of those who served in the Colonies, and also of a wide section of the British public at home. The Viceroy, speaking at a farewell banquet on the eve of his departure from India, said: ". . . remember that the Almighty has placed your hands to the greatest of His ploughs, in whose furrow the nations of the future are germinating and taking shape, to drive the blade a little farther in your time, to feel that somewhere among these millions you have left a little justice or happiness or prosperity, a sense of manliness or moral dignity, a spring of patriotism, a dawn of intellectual enlightenment, or a stirring of duty where it did not exist before. That is enough. That is the Englishman's justification . . ." If there is arrogance in these words, there is also simplicity. If there is a claim to racial superiority, there is also consciousness of the responsibilities which that superiority entailed. The imperialism of the British public was that of Curzon shorn of its metaphysics.

Combined with this heightened conception of duty to

the native races was the slowly dawning realisation that the relationship between the Mother Country and the white Dominions was one of partnership and not domination. During the past seventy years a new type of international association had been developing in a world still unconscious of it. There remained many who insisted on treating the Empire as a whole, without grasping the fact that in her relations with the Dominions in the temperate zones on the one hand, and with the tropical Colonies on the other, Great Britain's problems were entirely different. It would not, at first sight, seem hard for a reasonably sane individual to see that communities of his own kinsmen, living in conditions very much the same as those at home, should be treated differently from native tribes recently rescued from crude barbarism. Unfortunately, this was not so. It was not until the Great War that this essential difference was properly and generally understood.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE COMMONWEALTH IN CRISIS

**B**Y midnight on August 4th 1914 German troops and lorries had already crossed the Belgian frontier and, in accordance with Sir Edward Grey's ultimatum, the Empire was at war. No one, from the wildly cheering crowd outside Buckingham Palace, to the half-demented German Ambassador pacing the drawing-room of the Carlton House Terrace Embassy, realised what the word 'war' had come to mean.

The complete lack of understanding of the Dominions' attitude on the part of the Germans goes far to dispel the widespread belief in the affinity of our two nations. Writers who had confidently predicted that British India would rise, that Ireland would seize the opportunity to achieve Home Rule by force, and that the pro-German party in South Africa would proclaim a Boer Republic, were all grimly disappointed. The outbreak of the War was immediately followed by a display of imperial unity greater than had ever existed before.

Although the Dominions had not been consulted on the policy to be followed by the British Government in the face of the crisis, they had offered their help even before the ultimatum was sent. General Botha cabled that South Africa was prepared to defend her own frontiers, and that the imperial troops in the Union might be withdrawn for service elsewhere. In the House of Commons the cry of "God save Ireland" from an English Labour

M.P. brought the reply "God save England" from John Redmond and his Nationalist followers. Before the War ended India had sent a million men to the imperial armies. The French Canadian, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, whose compatriots felt less than any other race in the Empire the call to arms, said: "It is our duty to let Great Britain know, and to let the friends and foes of Great Britain know, that there is in Canada but one mind and one heart and that all Canadians stand behind the Mother Country." "Should honour demand the Mother Country to take part in hostilities", said the ex-Premier, Mr Fisher, "Australians will stand behind her to the last man and the last shilling." These were brave words, bravely carried out. But behind this display of determination was the plain truth so simply stated in the King's message of thanks to his Overseas Dominions: "This calamitous conflict is not of my seeking. My voice has been cast throughout on the side of peace."

Apart from the Dominion forces which served on the Western Front and in the Balkans, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand immediately dispatched troops against various German colonies. After the suppression of de Wet's 'Five Shilling' rebellion in the Union, General Botha led an expeditionary force into German South-west Africa which resulted in the surrender of the Germans at Windhoek in July 1915. In the same year Australian and New Zealand troops captured the enemy's Pacific colonies of Papua and Samoa. In November 1914 H.M.A.S. *Sydney*, the first ship of a Dominion navy to go into action, destroyed the light-cruiser *Emden* in Australian waters.

By the end of the War, out of a total white population of 15,000,000, the Dominions produced, trained, and

equipped a million and a quarter fighting men. As a result of necessary war expenditure, a huge burden was added to their national debts, and social development, so vital to new countries, was for four years brought literally to a standstill.

Vimy—Delville Wood—Suvla Bay—Mesopotamia—Palestine; out of the experiences which the new nations shared with the Mother Country, was born a closer intimacy. The results of this were soon apparent. It had been a time-honoured rule, that where any government provided and paid for an imperial service, it should have a hand in its control. Usually the government had been that of Great Britain; now came the Dominions' turn. They had supplied men and money, and it was right that they should have a chance to decide how both these were to be used. As Mr Bonar Law had said when he was Colonial Secretary: "It is not a possible arrangement that one set of men should contribute the lives and treasure of the people and have no say in the way in which those lives and treasure are expended. That cannot go on. There must be a change." In December 1916, therefore, a few weeks after the new Coalition Government had arrived in power, the Dominion prime ministers were invited to come to London to take part in a special War Conference of Empire. Mr Lloyd George, the new Premier, infused into the whole nation a will to win, and he saw that it was vitally necessary that the Dominions should take part in the fresh effort. He was a sufficiently great statesman to realise that the only way in which that could be done, was to call them to his counsels.

The Imperial War Cabinet met in March 1917. All



the Dominion prime ministers were present except the Australian, who was detained by Federal elections. The transactions were for the most part secret, though Mr Lloyd George in a statement to the House of Commons testified to the success of the scheme. Not only was its immediate value realised, but all those who attended were clear as to the effect it was likely to have upon future development. They foresaw the beginning of a permanent Imperial Council which would make it possible for consultation between the Dominions and Great Britain to be continuous. As a step in that direction, Mr Lloyd George proposed that the Imperial Cabinet should meet each year in the future to discuss problems of foreign policy. "We hope", he said, "that the holding of an annual Imperial Cabinet will become an accepted convention of the Constitution."

At the same time as the Cabinet was sitting in London, an Imperial Conference was being held under the chairmanship of the Colonial Secretary. While the former confined its attention principally to war policy, the latter discussed any subject which concerned the Empire as a whole. Among other things, it passed a resolution in favour of the summoning of a special imperial conference, after the War, to "reorganise the Empire". Remnants of the old colonial system still cluttered up the relations between the Dominions and the Mother Country. The former felt that they were now justified in demanding their removal. All the more so because of the brand-new assurance which had arisen from their War achievements. The Canadian representative spoke confidently of the time when the population of the Dominion would outnumber that of Great Britain. The impetus of the War had overthrown, in a few months, obstacles to

political and economic development which, in ordinary circumstances, must have taken years to overcome. Their industries had expanded beyond all belief: their prime ministers were working as equals in the Imperial Cabinet directing the prosecution of a great campaign: their armies had conquered the territories of a first-class European power.

The British ministers realised clearly that, as far as possible, the last vestiges of Downing Street rule must be removed. Forces had been set in motion in the Dominions which they had neither the power nor the wish to stop. The proposal for a conference was readily accepted.

There was one other feature of the part which the Dominions played in the British war administration which is perhaps even more striking. That was the inclusion of General Smuts as Minister without Portfolio in Lloyd George's innermost Cabinet. It is one of the great paradoxes of imperial history. The brilliant Cambridge scholar who had become Attorney-General of the Boer Republic; the celebrated guerrilla leader who had ridden on commando with a book of Kantian philosophy in his saddlebag; the Union Minister of Justice who had conquered German East Africa, now became one of the five men who had more power concentrated in their hands than any other five men in the history of the world. A little fiery Welsh solicitor, a sober Canadian Scot, an imperious ex-viceroy, and a one-time journalist, who had done more than any one else to bring about the downfall of the Boer Republic sixteen years before, were his colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

The second session of the full Imperial War Cabinet

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd George, Mr Bonar Law, Lord Curzon, and Lord Milner were the other principal members of the inner Cabinet.

began in June 1918. Besides settling the policy which the British Government was to follow at the Allied Supreme War Council, it introduced certain improvements into the system of inter-governmental consultation.<sup>1</sup> Before the third session began in November 1918 the Armistice had been announced and the Empire found itself faced with the task of co-operating with the other Allied and Associated Powers in making peace.

There was some uncertainty at first as to exactly how the Empire was to be represented at the Conference fixed to meet in January 1919. Except on one or two minor occasions, the Dominions had never been represented at a previous gathering of this sort. It was soon clear, however, that they intended to come to Versailles. On January 2nd Sir Robert Borden submitted a memorandum, in which he suggested that the Dominions should be put on the same footing as the smaller powers with special interests, like Belgium; while a panel system should be used to allow them to take part in the work of the official British Empire delegation. By this scheme three representatives were to be drawn from the United Kingdom and two in rotation from the Dominions. This plan was eventually followed. By the time the Conference was due to begin, the Imperial War Cabinet, in its new guise as the British Empire Peace Delegation, took up its residence at the Hotel Majestic in Paris, which was to be its headquarters for the period of the Conference.

Mr Winston Churchill has described the personalities of the delegation in his characteristic classic prose: "In contrast to President Wilson's isolation from the Senate [of the United States] it was Lloyd George's policy to fortify himself at important moments by the counsel and

<sup>1</sup> cf. *infra*, p. 82.

agreement of the leaders of the whole British Empire. This was *his* Senate, and he moved through the darkness and confusion of the Paris firmament always surrounded by numerous and shining satellites. At his side, with matchless experience and calm wisdom, stood Arthur Balfour, and (must we not add?) Louis Botha. . . . Did he require exponents of the Liberal creed in international affairs, General Smuts and Lord Robert Cecil could meet President Wilson on his own ground and speak his language to Wilson's surprise and gratification. Was there a moment when the robust instincts of youthful conquering pioneer states deserved expression, Mr Hughes of Australia and Mr Massey of New Zealand were at hand, with Sir Robert Borden of Canada not far away."<sup>1</sup>

It was natural that most of the work of rebuilding shattered Europe should fall to the lot of Mr Lloyd George and the United Kingdom ministers. The questions in which the Dominions played the most part were the problem of the status of the German colonies and the framing of the League Covenant. In the case of the former, the Dominions, proud of their first independent conquests, were strongly in favour of annexation. They felt that the integrity of British colonial administration was sufficiently proved without it being necessary to submit it to the supervision of an international body like the League of Nations. After considerable hesitation, however, they agreed to hold their conquests as 'C' class mandates, on condition that they were allowed to administer them as integral parts of their own territory.

There have been many theories as to how the League of Nations was first conceived. A host of writers and statesmen have entertained the idea of setting up some

<sup>1</sup> Churchill: *World Crisis*, vol. v.

international body to regulate the relations between great nations. False history has been used to trace its origin in the Holy Alliance. It is true that a vaguely similar idea is to be found in Kant's *Essay on Perpetual Peace*.<sup>1</sup> Actually the model for the League as it was constructed at Versailles was the British Empire. There had been an association in England since 1916, under the presidency of Lord Philimore, which aimed at the formation of some international association for the prevention of war. General Smuts, in his draft of the League Covenant, stated that the conference system he proposed, and which was eventually adopted, was to be similar to the Imperial Conference system already in existence in the British Empire. The mandate theory was none other than the principle of colonial trusteeship which, as Mr Lloyd George said, "we have always applied to British Colonies throughout the world".

The theory of the pacific settlement of disputes had for twenty years been the practice of the Commonwealth. As Professor Zimmern rightly points out, it was actually equipped with an efficient police force in the shape of the British Navy.

But there were, unhappily, two great differences. One was the sanctions clause in the League Covenant, and the second was the element which made sanctions necessary: I mean the absence of an instinct for mutual co-operation and compromise among those countries which undertook to fulfil it; or to put it in a more legal way, their reluctance to surrender some of their sovereignty to an outside authority, as the Dominions have done to the Commonwealth. The eventual failure of the League has been due to the differences and not to the similarities between the

<sup>1</sup> General Smuts was keenly interested in Kantian philosophy.

two institutions. The machinery of the League has usually worked perfectly efficiently: where it has failed, that failure has been due to a lack of loyalty among its members. No ideal, whether it be Christianity or Communism, has succeeded, except at the cost of sacrifice by the faithful, and no one has yet been found willing to lay down his life for the League.

To the framers of the Covenant these defects were only partly visible. It was felt that, in time, experience would provide the necessary adjustments. To the British, in spite of the goading of the Press at home, it seemed that a just peace might produce that essential spirit of co-operation. Indeed, in the spring of 1919 all things seemed possible—except, perhaps, another war.

As the Conference lingered on, the hopes of a just settlement seemed more and more faint. This is no place to try to apportion blame for the Treaty of Versailles, if any blame is indeed merited. Clemenceau may have been right in trying to break Germany for good and all. Probably such a policy was impossible. But a settlement which gave Germany a legitimate source of grievance, and at the same time left her with the potentialities of eventually revenging herself by force, could only have one result—a result which twenty years later we seem on the point of seeing fulfilled.

It was a realisation of this problem that caused Mr Lloyd George, in the twilight of the Conference, to call a meeting of the whole British Empire Delegation in Paris. His purpose was to strengthen his hand when he came to try to persuade the French to modify the draft of the Peace Treaty in favour of the Germans. The Delegation was unanimous in support of his proposals. When, however, he attempted to reason with the French he failed to

secure any real mitigation of the original terms, and on June 28th the treaty was signed almost unchanged. This last effort of the representatives of the British Empire to make a fair and equitable peace, though it failed, is one of the redeeming features of the story of the Peace Conference of Versailles.

From the point of view of the Commonwealth there was a special significance in the fact that the Dominion representatives signed the treaty in company with those of the United Kingdom. According to international law only sovereign states are entitled to sign treaties. Up to that time the Dominions were looked upon as dependencies of Great Britain, who alone had the right to sign all international covenants on their behalf. The effect of the insistence of the Dominion members of the British Empire Delegation upon signing the treaty independently of the Mother Country, was to display before the whole world, for the first time, their new status. As a matter of fact, foreign countries, always a little mystified by the perverse illogicality of the imperial connection, were slow to grasp the significance of their action. The French and Italians had looked upon Great Britain's support of the Dominions' claim to be represented at the Conference as a mild piece of eccentricity—probably calculated to increase her influence to the detriment of her allies. Even to-day, in spite of all the paraphernalia of nationhood, foreign powers are still inclined to regard the Dominions as dependencies of the United Kingdom rather than as sovereign nations. This is particularly true of the attitude of the United States to Canada.

Now that the settlement of Europe was completed, the British prime ministers and their staffs dispersed to their various capitals to tackle the work of national

reconstruction. With their going the Imperial War Cabinet ceased to exist. For nearly three years it had virtually controlled the imperial policy both at war and in peace. It had been besides that a symbol of the essential unity of the Empire in the face of a gigantic emergency. The speeches of all those present prove that that sense of unity was a living bond and not merely a crude reaction of fear. So vivid was that idea in the minds of the British and Dominion prime ministers, that they prophesied confidently that a body similar to the War Cabinet would become the machinery of imperial co-operation in the future: that it was, in fact, a piece of permanent constitutional development.

Unhappily they proved to be wrong.



## CHAPTER V

### FREE COMMUNITIES

THE new world which arose from the Peace Conferences was both fascinating and alarming. The War had shattered the old scheme of things, and each individual set himself to remould it nearer to his heart's desire. Statesmen and experts lived in the dazzling light of world publicity, conscious that they acted not only with the eyes of their contemporaries upon them, but under the gaze of future generations, whose happiness and prosperity depended upon the nature of their decisions.

The League of Nations was to multitudes of men and women the beginning of a new system of world society. The settlement at Versailles, if by no means ideal, was the first attempt to give permanence to the national aspirations of races, which had for centuries been under the domination of Great Powers. Statesmen who had worked at the Conference were under no delusions as to the dangers before civilisation, but the ordinary man, especially in the British Commonwealth, felt that the last world conflict had been fought, that right was victorious, and that in future he might leave the conduct of international affairs to the moral powers of the League.

This blind faith in the magic properties of the policy of collective security, together with the post-War growth of nationalism, had their effect on the British Commonwealth. In the first place, the intimate relations between Great Britain and the Dominions, which had arisen from the

stress of the war years, were relaxed. The prophecies of Mr Lloyd George and Sir Robert Borden, that the Imperial War Cabinet would develop as part of the permanent machinery of the Imperial Constitution, did not come true. As far as constitutional progress was concerned, it was felt that any further formal steps towards imperial unity were no longer necessary; also that any extension of the legislative powers of the Dominions should be postponed until they had accustomed themselves to the novelty of post-War conditions. At the same time the need of improving the political co-operation between various parts of the Commonwealth had become considerably less urgent, now that the League of Nations was prepared to act as an insurance agency against future war.

This feeling lasted while the League remained the centre of world politics, and it was not until the effects of the failure of sanctions in 1936 were realised, that a new attitude appeared.

At the same time the growth of nationalism in Europe and elsewhere had had a widespread effect. President Wilson's slogan of 'Self-determination' had been proclaimed as the basis of the Versailles Settlement. There were many nations on the Allied side who anxiously inquired if it applied to them as well as to those races who had been under the domination of the Central Powers. These inquiries were accompanied by agitation, ranging from the personal activities of Colonel Lawrence on behalf of the Arabs, to the fiercer outbreaks of rioting and rebellion in Ireland, India, Egypt, and elsewhere.

In the Dominions, too, the rising power of General Hertzog in South Africa and of the Liberal Party in Canada, which had always contained the strongest exponents of Canadian nationalism because of the large

French element among its supporters, showed the same tendency in a rather less violent form.

The real effect of this development was not, however, apparent when the first post-War Imperial Conference met in 1921. The atmosphere of a family gathering still lingers at these Conferences, and it was only right, therefore, that when the various prime ministers met in London, the discussion of the status of the Dominions was carried on, not at a council table, but in the seclusion of the British Premier's own home. A distinguished American, who happened to be at Chequers and was questioned on the working of the Federal Constitution in the United States, describes how "they spent the whole of Saturday, and Saturday evening, and all of Sunday until luncheon, under the trees or in the library at Chequers discussing informally and familiarly and with a profound knowledge . . . the problems which were before them". Finally agreement was reached on what to the American seemed a most significant date, the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

They had begun to talk for the first time officially of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and a few months later the new term was used in an imperial document—the Irish Treaty of 1921. This phrase itself was an admission of the equality of the Dominions with the Mother Country, and an effective definition of their new status.

It was a graphic example, too, of the power of personal contact for the settlement of disputes. In spite of the resolution passed by the Imperial War Conference, recommending that a special constitutional conference should be summoned to examine the relations of the Empire, a week-end of discussion between the heads of various

governments provided a measure of understanding sufficient to make the calling of any further meeting unnecessary.

As Mr Hughes, the Australian Prime Minister, said when referring to the proposed constitutional conference: "What is this Conference to do? . . . Is this Conference to draw up a declaration of rights, to set down in black and white the relations between Britain and the Dominions? Surely this Conference is not intended to limit the rights we now have. Yet what new right, new extension of power can it give us? In effect we have all the rights of self-government enjoyed by independent nations. We were Colonies, and we have become Dominions. We have been accorded the status of nations. I know of no power the Prime Minister of Great Britain has which General Smuts has not. Our presence here round this table, the agenda paper before us, the basis of equality on which we meet—these things speak in trumpet tones that this Conference of free democratic nations is, as Mr Lloyd George said yesterday, 'a living force'."

The truth of these words was perfectly clear to all those who were present. It was true that General Smuts's powers were nowhere set down in writing, but where is there any statement of the powers belonging to the British Premier? Again, though the Imperial Government retained some miscellaneous powers which, if it so wished, could be used to interfere with the domestic affairs of the Dominions, as General Smuts and his colleagues knew perfectly well, this would never be done without their consent, and consequently, these powers carried with them no threat to Dominion sovereignty.

As a result of this general understanding, it was decided that an examination of the new status of the Dominions

should be postponed until such time as action proved more necessary. For the moment the matter was allowed to drop.

Though the next Conference in 1923 was chiefly engaged in drawing up a standard procedure for the negotiation and signing of treaties, by 1926, when the Dominion premiers were again due to meet in London, the agitation for a definite restatement of 'Dominion status' had received impetus from all sides. First, the appearance of Ireland at the council table added another member to what might be called the 'progressive' section of the Commonwealth; one which made no bones about its desire for the widest possible independence of the Mother Country. In South Africa, too, General Hertzog, pledged to an extreme nationalist programme, had lately succeeded Smuts as Prime Minister. It was, however, an incident in Canada, the biggest and most influential Dominion of all, which caused her to throw her weight upon the side of the 'restatement party' and thus made action inevitable.

In 1926 Lord Byng, the Governor-General, had refused a dissolution to the Liberal Premier, Mr Mackenzie King.<sup>1</sup> According to British parliamentary custom, the Governor-General's action was unconstitutional: for in Great Britain the King must always dissolve Parliament if his Prime Minister requests him to do so. The result of this was that, when Mr Mackenzie King came over to London to take part in the Imperial Conference, he was determined to obtain a proper definition of the new status of the Dominions, and a recognition of the principle that a Governor-General's powers in a Dominion were exactly the same as those of the King in Great Britain.

<sup>1</sup> cf. Chapter XIII, p. 162.

In both these objects he was entirely successful. The definition which was finally agreed upon, and for which the statesmanlike wisdom of Lord Balfour was responsible, runs as follows :

"They are autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate to one another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations."

To a lawyer this statement might appear rather vague, for it speaks both of an Empire and a Commonwealth, terms which are at first sight mutually exclusive; but it described accurately, as far as it was possible to describe such an enigmatic institution at all, the real relationship between the different parts of the Commonwealth to one another. What was even more important, its phrasing satisfied both extremes of opinions: to the nationalist it seemed to admit the equality of the Dominions, and to the imperialist it proved that the Empire was still in existence.

The Conference next applied itself to the task of making fact accord with theory. In law the Imperial Government retained various powers by which it could interfere in Dominion affairs, while the parliaments of the latter were still without certain powers which are generally considered an essential part of national sovereignty. In the first place, the relations between a Governor-General and his ministers had been brought to the fore by the events in Canada. Up to 1926 the former had been the servant of the Government in Great Britain rather than the personal representative of the King. He had been partly a

constitutional monarch and partly a glorified Civil Servant, entrusted with the task of keeping his eye on Dominion ministers and explaining the policy of the Mother Country when and if this was necessary.

In deference to the wishes of Canada this position was altered: the Conference laid down that in future the Governor was to occupy precisely the same position in a Dominion constitution as the King did in the English one. He was to have exactly the same powers—no more and no less—as His Majesty had here. In future the British Government was to be represented in the Dominions by High Commissioners; and this was done after 1928.

The next question which the Conference turned to consider was the legislative powers of the overseas parliaments. It was true, as Mr Hughes had said, that they had most of the rights enjoyed by independent nations, but in theory some restrictions still existed. In the first place, the power of the Imperial Parliament at Westminster to pass laws taking effect in the Dominions remained. If this right was frequently used it would be a very serious handicap to Dominion legislation. Indeed, its very existence was an obstacle to the full sovereign status set out in the Balfour Declaration. Actually the enactment of such imperial legislation by the British Parliament had practically ceased, and was done only after consultation with the Dominion affected. Clearly, however, if they were to be equal partners in the Commonwealth, all such restrictions must go.

Besides this, no Dominion was able to make its legislation take effect extra-territorially. This meant that they could not pass a law which would control or punish an act committed by any of their nationals in a foreign land. The British Parliament can, for instance, make laws for

the discipline of British troops serving overseas, or others which are enforceable in consular courts in those countries like China, where British subjects may not be tried by native magistrates. There had already been occasions, especially during the Great War, when this disability had proved most inconvenient, and the Imperial Parliament had had to pass special Acts giving a Dominion power to deal with some particular class of cases. Though there might be some advantage in the retention by the Imperial Parliament of the sole right to pass such laws, it seemed only just that the Dominions should have full authority over their own citizens. The second problem was, therefore, how this could be most conveniently done.

In all Constitutions there existed the right of the Governor-General to reserve certain subjects for the approval of, or disallowance by, the Crown. This approval was given or withheld on the advice of the British Government. Moreover, it was the practice that *any* Act might be submitted to the British Government to be placed before the King, in case he wished to exercise his prerogative of disallowance. The answer invariably given through the Dominion Secretary was "that His Majesty would not be advised to exercise his powers of disallowance". The mere fact, however, that the Imperial Government still formally advised the King as to the propriety of Dominion legislation was offensive to the feelings of nationalists like General Hertzog, and was scarcely compatible with the equality of status which they claimed.

One other question which the Conference had to settle was the right of the Dominions to pass laws for the regulation of merchant shipping. They had already been given certain powers over vessels registered at their own



ports, but sections 735 and 736 of the Merchant Shipping Act of 1894 still placed restrictions on these. The chief difficulty was that it was convenient that there should be "uniformity of administrative practice" throughout the Commonwealth, and this would cease to be the case if each Dominion had the right to legislate at its own sweet will.

The decisions of the Conference were as follows: with the exception of merchant shipping and the practice of the Imperial Government of advising the King to allow or disallow acts submitted to him by the Dominions, the remainder were to be examined by a Conference of Experts, who were directed to present their report to the next Imperial Conference to be held in 1930. The problem of merchant shipping was to be placed in the hands of a special sub-committee; and with regard to the right of Imperial Government to advise the King on questions concerning the Dominion legislation, this rule was laid down:

"that it would not be in accordance with constitutional practice for advice to be tendered to His Majesty by His Majesty's Government in Great Britain, in any matter appertaining to the affairs of a Dominion against the views of the Government of that Dominion".

In consequence of this, the Imperial Government would no longer advise the King to disallow any act submitted to him by a Dominion and the practice has ceased to have any significance.

Looking back upon the work which that Conference did, and the personnel which it contained, it appears to be almost a miracle. At the council table in the Cabinet room of 10 Downing Street, sat General Hertzog, an

ex-rebel who was reputed to have come to London with the object of announcing the right of South Africa to secede from the Commonwealth; next to him were Kevin O'Higgins and Desmond Fitzgerald, both ex-rebels representing the Irish Free State, a country still nursing the real and imagined grievances of seven centuries. There were the two Canadian representatives, Mr Mackenzie King, who had recently been attacking the British Government, and Mr Lapointe, a French Canadian who might therefore be supposed to have no particular affection for the Empire. Besides these there were an Indian prince, the Maharaja of Burdwan, the premiers of Australia, New Zealand, and Newfoundland, and the representatives of Great Britain led by Earl Balfour and Mr Baldwin. If any proof is needed of the real strength and latent unity of this free Commonwealth of Nations, the fact that men so diverse in outlook, so varied in tradition and drawn from so many different races, could be found to agree on the ideals upon which it is founded is surely proof enough.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE STATUTE OF WESTMINSTER

THE recommendations of the 1929 Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation formed the basis of the Statute of Westminster. The report began by stating that the task of this Conference had been to apply to practical problems the principles of freedom, equality, and tolerance, which have slowly arisen from the experience of the "communities now constituting that most remarkable and successful experiment in co-operation between free democracies . . . the British Commonwealth of Nations", principles which had already been agreed to by the prime ministers present at the Imperial Conference of 1926.

The first section of the report dealt with the King's power, on the advice of his ministers in Great Britain, to disallow any Dominion Act. This subject had already been considered in 1926, but it was thought advisable that the whole position should be clearly restated. Actually this right had not been used since 1873, and the Conference therefore agreed that the present constitutional position was that it no longer existed. The one exception to this was legislation affecting the Colonial Stock Act, 1900. Joseph Chamberlain had induced the Imperial Government to allow the Treasury to admit Dominion stock to the list of trustee securities on certain conditions. This measure, incidentally, had been of enormous value to colonial economic development. One of

those conditions was that any Dominion legislation likely injuriously to affect those stocks, might be disallowed. The Conference agreed that the King's power to do this might still be exercised.

The second question was the right of Reservation. Under all Dominion Constitutions, the Governor-General had discretionary powers of reserving Bills on certain subjects for the approval of the King, and in some—e.g. the Australian, New Zealand, and South African—this power had been made compulsory. After reiterating the principle laid down by the 1926 Imperial Conference, that the Government in the United Kingdom would not give advice to the King contrary to that tendered him by any Dominion, the report went on to say that this right of reservation might be abolished by those Dominions, such as South Africa and Australia, which had power independently to amend their Constitutions; or by the others, e.g. New Zealand and Canada, after the necessary legislation had been passed by the Imperial Parliament. This has only been done by South Africa and the Irish Free State.

Most of the remainder of the report dealt with the proposals for extending the legislative powers of the Dominions. These were considered by the next Imperial Conference and afterwards enacted in the Statute of Westminster.

By 1930, when this Conference met, the economic crisis had begun to shake the stolid complacency of a world grown accustomed to think in terms of rising prices and endless prosperity. Though the minds of most of the prime ministers gathered in London were more concerned with problems of economic reconstruction than of constitutional progress, the report of the 1929 Conference was

discussed and the main provisions of the proposed statute were agreed to. By August 1st 1931 this had been drafted by the British Government, considered by the parliaments of the Dominions, and resolutions had been passed requesting the Imperial Parliament to proceed immediately with its enactment.

It would be a mistake to suppose that it was acclaimed everywhere as a 'Bill of Rights' for the Commonwealth. On the contrary, in Australia and New Zealand, it was looked upon as a dangerous loosening of imperial ties. The latter especially considered that it imposed burdens upon her greater than she was able to bear. The Government of South Australia went so far as to pass an emphatic protest against the statute, and there were many critics in the United Kingdom, of the eminence of the late Lord Buckmaster, who considered it "a grave mistake".

The main ground for this criticism was that it attempted to formalise the relations between the Dominions and Great Britain and thus deprive them of the flexibility which alone enabled them to stand the strain of modern conditions. Once these relations were set in writing they would become the tools of every legal quibbler who liked to claim for his cause 'legal rights'. As Great Britain found in the case of the American colonies, insistence on legal rights is not the way in which an empire can be ruled. Too late she had learnt that give and take by all parties, forms the only possible basis for an imperial constitution.

This criticism does not seem to be borne out by the events of the last few years. After all, the statute was itself in the nature of a compromise between the Mother Country and those of the Dominions which felt themselves

able to undertake the responsibilities of sovereign states. It was a concession, too, to the races in the Commonwealth, such as the South African Dutch, which do not understand the Anglo-Saxon idea of a 'binding convention' and which are only used to recognising legal rights when they are set down on paper. Above all, it allowed any Dominion to contract out of the main provisions of the statute, and this was duly done by Australia, New Zealand, and Newfoundland.

To-day there are very few persons who would call the Statute of Westminster "a grave mistake". Those who still maintain this attitude, are only those who refuse to recognise that in the last twenty years the nature of the political connection between Great Britain and the Dominions has developed from Empire to Commonwealth.

The effect of the statute has not been to deprive the Imperial Parliament of its sovereignty. It is true that section 4 states that no Act passed by it will be deemed to extend to a Dominion as part of the law of that Dominion, unless it is expressly declared in the Act that the Dominion has requested, and consented to, its enactment. The fact that the Parliament at Westminster retains the power to pass Acts which are enforceable in the Dominions is sufficient proof that its sovereignty remains. The object of the section is to lay down the principles upon which this power will be used and which will be in keeping with the new status of the Dominions.

According to English law it is impossible for one Parliament to bind its successors, so that if in the future it was desired that the Statute of Westminster should be repealed, this could legally be done. Though this may be true in theory, in practice it would be impossible to

repeal the statute without breaking up the Commonwealth. Such action, taken without the consent of the Dominions, would have as little effect as the enactment of legislation designed to take over once more the thirteen American colonies, which were granted independence after the War of 1776.

By section 2, sub-s. 1, of the statute, the Colonial Laws Validity Act, 1865, is repealed, and it is laid down that in future: "No law and no provision of any law made after the commencement of this Act by the Parliament of a Dominion shall be void or inoperative on the ground that it is repugnant to the law of England. . . ." It had always been a rule that colonial legislation could not override an imperial *Act*. The original object of this statute had been to prevent a rather obstinate old judge in one of the Australian states from declaring that a number of the laws passed by the State legislature were void because they were contrary to the *Common Law* of England. The Colonial Laws Validity Act made it clear that only those laws which were repugnant to imperial statutes *expressly* stated to apply to the colonies were to be deemed invalid.

In the beginning, this Act had increased the powers of the Colonial Parliaments, but as time went on, and these were widened in company with the development of 'Dominion status', it began to have an increasingly restrictive effect. By section 2, sub-s. 2, it is stated that no law passed by the Dominion legislatures shall be void because it is contrary to any law of Great Britain, whether that law is meant to apply to the Dominions or not. Power is also given to the Dominions to amend or repeal any British Act which until that time had applied to them.

By section 3 the Dominions are given full powers of

making laws having extra-territorial operation. The 1929 Conference felt that it was impossible to place any restrictions upon this, though it was feared that the Dominions, by legislating extra-territorially, might involve themselves in serious disputes with other countries, which might even lead to war. However, as the Prime Minister of Canada said: "We must trust to the common sense and good judgment of our own parliament not to exercise that power in such a way as will cause either irritation or difficulty to others or evil consequences to ourselves."

Sections 5 and 6 deal with the powers of the Dominions concerning the regulation of their own merchant shipping and the establishment of Courts of Admiralty.

The next two sections are meant to prevent the Constitutions of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand from being altered in any way other than that in existence before the Statute of Westminster was passed, e.g. in Canada by an imperial Act repealing or amending any part of the British North America Acts; by means of a referendum in Australia; or in the case of New Zealand, by a Dominion Act which has received royal assent after reservation. The reason for this provision was to protect the rights of the Canadian provinces and of the states in Australia from being encroached upon by the federal governments. In section 7, sub-s. 3, the Act goes further and says that the powers conferred on the Parliament of Canada shall be restricted to the enactment of laws dealing only with those matters which are within its competence.

The only other section of importance is that in which Australia, New Zealand, and Newfoundland contract out of the statute. None of these countries had been very eager to see it passed; they felt that such an Act was a



concession to the separatist elements in the Commonwealth at the expense of the loyal Dominions. At the same time, however, it was made possible for their parliaments by ordinary legislation to adopt any or all of the other sections of the statute, when it appeared in their interests to do so. The present Australian Government has announced its intention of adopting the main provisions of the Statute of Westminster after consultation with the states has taken place.

The part of the statute which affects all the Dominions and Great Britain equally, is the preamble. According to English Common Law the preamble to an Act, not being a part of the Act, has no binding force. But in the preamble to the Statute of Westminster is set out an important convention of the Constitution. It says that ". . . as the Crown is the symbol of the free association of the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and as they are united by a common allegiance to the Crown, it would be in accord with the established constitutional position of all the members of the Commonwealth in relation to one another that any alteration in the law touching the Succession to the Throne or the Royal Style and Titles shall hereafter require the assent as well of the Parliaments of all the Dominions as of the Parliament of the United Kingdom".

This means in effect that the institution of the monarchy, being the symbol of the unity of the Commonwealth, can only be altered if all its members agree. This might seem to prove that the Imperial Crown is single and not, as is more probably correct, sixfold, since if the King in South Africa was different from the King in Canada, there would be no logical reason why the Union Government should have to obtain the consent of the Canadian Parliament

before it changed the titles or person of its own monarch. The importance of this question lies in the fact that it governs the legal position of the Commonwealth in the case of one member being involved in a war. Since, if the Crown is single, all territories owing it allegiance would automatically become belligerents. On the other hand, if it is multiple, one might remain neutral while the others were fighting.

The whole problem of the relations between the Crown and the Commonwealth, as defined by the preamble, became of a very real importance during the tragic circumstances of the abdication of King Edward. Then, for the first time, the Imperial Constitution which came into being after 1931, was put to a test; a test which, in no other circumstances, except war, could have been of a more searching character.

The Declaration of Abdication Act, passed by the United Kingdom Parliament on December 11th 1936, stated in its preamble that "the Dominion of Canada, pursuant to the provisions of section 4 of the Statute of Westminster, 1931, has requested and consented to the enactment of this Act, and the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and the Union of South Africa have assented thereto".

The reason why Canada should be mentioned separately from the other three Dominions, and the Irish Free State not mentioned at all, caused considerable mystification among no less personages than the members of Parliament themselves. The Solicitor-General, with the air of a man embarking on an explanation of the Eleusinian Mysteries to a class of schoolboys, consented to explain. Actually, whatever may be the intricacies at law, the reasons for this differentiation are fairly clear.

According to the convention set out in the preamble, it was necessary to obtain the assent of all the Dominions before the Abdication Act was passed, and this was done. Under section 4 of the statute, it was also essential that Canada—but not Australia or New Zealand, neither of which was affected by this section of the statute—should specially request that the Act should be made to apply expressly to her. This was effected by a Canadian Order-in-Council. As far as South Africa was concerned her position had been altered in consequence of the passing of the Status of the Union Act, 1934, by which an imperial Act could not apply to South Africa through section 4, but must be enacted separately by the Union Parliament.

Actually all these Dominions have passed legislation regularising the succession to the throne. As a result of this a peculiar situation has arisen which may have important constitutional results in the future. While Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, following the example of Great Britain, have taken as the date of the demise of the Crown, December 11th (when King Edward signed the Abdication Bill), South Africa, and for that matter the Irish Free State, have chosen to consider December 10th (when he signed his Declaration of Abdication) as being the last day of his reign and the date of the accession of his successor. Thus, at law, for a space of a few hours, Edward VIII was king of one portion of the Commonwealth, while at the same time George VI reigned over the other. The consequences of this anomaly remain to be seen, but it undoubtedly strengthens the arguments of those who hold that the Imperial Crown is not single but multiple.

The significance of this argument in the eyes of constitutional lawyers is, as we have had occasion to notice,

the fact that it governs the legal relations between the various members of the Commonwealth in time of war. But all the profundity of lawyers would not cause a single government to take an active part in a war if the people of that Dominion were unwilling to do so. The question as to whether such a thing as 'belligerent neutrality' exists depends on the attitude of the enemy and the circumstances of the conflict itself. Though in the Boer War contingents of colonial troops served in South Africa, the Dominions scarcely considered themselves as being at war with the Republics.

The Great War was an entirely different matter. In the first place, the territories of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand were potentially in the war zone owing to the proximity of the German colonies. Secondly, whereas in the case of the Dutch Republics the defeat of the enemy was a foregone conclusion, the outcome of the Great War was by no means certain. The existence of the whole Empire was at stake, and as the Dominions desired the continuance of the Empire, it was in their interests to take every step to prevent its defeat.

The same considerations will arise if another great European conflict occurs. Should the victory or defeat of the Mother Country be in the balance, the Dominions will have to decide whether they think that the continuance of the Commonwealth would be worth the loss of another generation of their young men. One thing is certain, and it is that the defeat of Great Britain by an enemy means the break-up of the Imperial Commonwealth.

Whatever may be the decisions which the Dominions make, they will not be arrived at owing to the pressure of legal argument. Sentiment and self-interest must each

play its part, and what the consequences will be are a question, not for the present, but for the future.

The right of any Dominion to secede from the Commonwealth must follow the same general principles. Mr Bonar Law said in 1922 that no government in Great Britain would ever use force to compel a Dominion to do anything which the mass of its citizens were unwilling to do. Therefore to deny the right of a Dominion to secede when nothing will be done to prevent it from doing so, is simply a waste of time.

It does not follow that any Dominion will or is even likely to secede. There are stronger bonds than those of law to bind them together. If it were not so, then the passing of the Statute of Westminster would have been the end of the Commonwealth as an institution, instead of the beginning of a new and greater phase in its development. The Commonwealth is not the invention of constitutional lawyers, though it appears to provide them with a fascinating playground, nor is it merely a piece of legal machinery. It is the product of soldiers and statesmen, and merchants and men of action in a thousand different spheres, belonging to many races and generations who were faced with practical problems and had to solve them in a practical way. To-day, when our problems are as difficult as they ever were, we will not find a solution in the bosom of the law, but in the hearts of British citizens scattered throughout the world.

## THE IMPERIAL CONSTITUTION

"INDIVIDUALS may form communities," said Mr Disraeli, "but it is institutions alone that can create nations." For it is they which embody the ideals and aspirations of a people, and which, surviving the passing generations, link them more closely together. The ancient church in any English village standing in contrast to the humbler houses round about, represents the piety and reverence of those who, from century to century, have worshipped in it. It is and always has been the centre of village life. The character of its rector reacts for good or evil on the demeanour of his flock. It plays an allotted and weighty part in their childhood and their maturity, and gives them a peaceful sanctury when the end arrives.

So it is with our two great national institutions—the Crown and Parliament. They are more than the mere machinery of government: they are coeval with our national existence. Associated with them are all the great achievements of our history; their form is not the work of one man but of many, and they mirror the strength and weakness of our national character. Nor are they the property of the citizens of Great Britain only: they belong as surely to the other British communities overseas.

Thus the Imperial Crown stands as the symbol of the free society of the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations—the common property of all those who share

in the traditions and associations which attach to it; in its ideas of tolerance in matters political and religious, of the freedom of individual spirit, and of co-operation in public affairs. So, too, with our parliaments. Only so long as representative democracy remains the common system of government among its members, can the Imperial Commonwealth exist. Seven dictators in conference would have about as much capacity for co-operation as seven wasps in a jar, and without co-operation the whole imperial structure would collapse. So the Crown and Parliament, and the ideas associated with them, are not merely the symbols but are the sure foundations upon which the Commonwealth is built.

That it is the institution of the Crown, and not the person of the monarch, which retains our affection and respect, was shown by the events of December 1936. The great popularity of King Edward did not prevent him from having to abdicate as soon as he had made up his mind to follow a line of action which seemed certain to damage an ancient office of which he was the temporary occupant.

This does not mean to say that the character of the monarch is unimportant. On the contrary, his influence is far greater to-day than it has been at any time since the House of Hanover ascended the throne of Great Britain two centuries ago. It is difficult, as Dr Jennings<sup>1</sup> has found, to estimate what part he personally plays in the internal politics of Great Britain, though it is clear that while his influence has at all times been very great, it must largely depend upon the ability of the monarch himself. In the case of the Commonwealth, however, the increase of His Majesty's influence has been due to the

<sup>1</sup> *Cabinet Government*, Cambridge University Press, 1936.

constitutional changes which have taken place in the last twenty-five years.

The King plays a greater part in the appointment of his Governors-General than he ever did in the past, and as these have the right to communicate with him at any time through his private secretary, he is well supplied with first-hand information concerning events in each of his Dominions. He is also in direct touch with his five governments overseas through their High Commissioners in the United Kingdom. On a particular occasion, one of his Irish Free State ministers came over to London to obtain his personal consent before a certain step was taken by that Government.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it is the newest and most extraordinary of the paradoxes of our Imperial Constitution, that the more democratic it becomes the greater grows the influence of the Crown. Mr J. A. Spender has pointed out that, since His Majesty may be advised on a particular question by each of his governments and as this advice may conflict, it must necessarily devolve upon the King to make the ultimate decision. The government whose advice is not accepted would either have to make way for another ministry or carry the Dominion in question out of the Commonwealth. Though it is exceedingly unlikely that a deadlock of this sort will ever be allowed to occur, such a possibility must not be entirely ignored.

As with the internal politics of Great Britain, it is hard to discover the personal influence which His Majesty has upon imperial policy generally. There is no doubt, however, that the late King George played a considerable part in bringing about the Irish Settlement of 1921. It

<sup>1</sup> 1931. The point at issue was the striking of a separate Great Seal for the Irish Free State. A similar step was taken by the Union in 1934 on the occasion of the passing of the Status of the Union Act.



was his speech at the opening of the Ulster Parliament<sup>1</sup> that made the beginning of negotiations between the rebels and the British Government possible. There is no doubt that his quiet personality in the background had a powerful influence upon composing the bitterness between the different races over which he was called to rule. It was in no small degree due to his wisdom that in a brief interval of consciousness on the night he died, when he whispered, "How is the Empire?", one of his private secretaries standing at his bedside was able to reply, "Sir, all is well with the Empire."

The institutions which have grown up within the Commonwealth are connected either with the Crown or with Parliament. Thus the Judicial Committee is derived from the King's prerogative of justice, while the conference system springs from the necessity of consultation between the governments of the various member-nations. It is in these institutions that the Imperial Constitution has its roots.

#### GOVERNORS-GENERAL

In the days of the old aristocratic Empire, the King's representatives had been his personal friends and supporters. They were men like Lord Willoughby, who held Barbados for Charles I against Parliament, and the

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by J. A. Spender, *Great Britain, Empire and Commonwealth*, p. 610. "The eyes of the whole Empire are on Ireland to-day—that Empire in which so many nations and races have come together in spite of ancient feuds, and in which new nations have come to birth within the lifetime of the youngest in this hall. I am emboldened by that thought to look beyond the sorrow and anxiety which have clouded of late my vision of Irish affairs. . . . In that hope I appeal to all Irishmen to pause, to stretch out the hand of forbearance and conciliation, to forgive and to forget and to join in making for the land which they love a new era of peace, contentment, and goodwill."

admirable Sir W. Stapleton, both of whom combined a firm sense of loyalty with great administrative talents.

In the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a colonial governorship was generally looked on as a temporary post for political placemen until a cushier job could be found for them at home. There were many notable exceptions to the hosts of mediocrities who were sent abroad to administer His Majesty's colonies, but on the whole the general standard of ability was unreasonably low.

With the growth of self-government, however, the status of the Governors-General changed. They became paid Civil Servants entrusted with the job of watching over the interests of the Imperial Government abroad. While the power of reservation still existed, it was the Governor-General who exercised it on the instructions he received from Great Britain. He was, in effect, representative of the King and Imperial Government combined—dual functions which it required no little tact to perform.

This situation continued until 1926 when, as we have seen, the dispute between Lord Byng and his Liberal advisers in Canada caused the whole question to be reviewed by the Imperial Conference of that year. As a result it was established that the future relations between the Governor-General and a Dominion government were to be precisely the same as the relations between the King and his ministers in Great Britain. Further, at the next Conference, 1930, it was laid down that the two parties interested in the appointment of His Majesty's representative were the King and his Dominion ministers, and that he would in future act on their advice without the interference of the British Cabinet.

In accordance with this new rule, Mr Scullin, the Commonwealth Prime Minister, instead of the Dominions Secretary, signed the King's Commission appointing Sir Isaac Isaacs Governor-General of Australia in 1931. Sir Isaac Isaacs, who had been Chief Justice, and was well known for his Liberal-Labour sympathies, was the first Australian to be appointed His Majesty's representative in that Dominion. This new development was not entirely favoured even in Australia itself, where a petition was organised and widely supported, protesting against any such innovation. The danger of appointing an individual having a personal connection with a political party, to an office where impartiality is especially required, was obvious. There was even the fear that the appointment might become an issue in some future general election which would be wholly contrary to the conventional separation of the monarchy from politics. As a writer in the *Round Table* pointed out, the Imperial Conference of 1926 did not intend, when it laid down that the Governor-General should not be a representative of the British Government, that he should become the representative of the Dominion Ministry. Moreover, sentiment attached to the office was bound to be weakened and its wider associations lost. It is significant, therefore, that though in January 1937 the Union Government selected Sir Patrick Duncan, the Minister for Mines in the Hertzog Cabinet, to succeed the Earl of Clarendon, the Australians did not appoint another native-born Governor-General after Sir Isaac Isaacs' tenure had expired, and there is no reason to suppose that the precedent will necessarily be followed by any Dominion in the future.

The special position of the Governor-General in Ireland is dealt with elsewhere, but it should be noted that the

Governor-General in New Zealand and the Governor of Newfoundland retain the same status as they had before 1926. They are still the agents of the British Ministry in those Dominions and theoretically they are still bound to carry out its orders, even though on occasion this may differ from the advice tendered them by their own ministers.

As a result of the new status of the Governors-General, the King has had a greater personal choice of his representatives. This was especially insisted on by the late King George, who refused to allow the announcement of Sir Isaac Isaacs' appointment to be made from Buckingham Palace, because Mr Scullin had made it known that he intended that this appointment should be made even before he had actually consulted the King.

This personal relationship between His Majesty and his representatives was emphasised at the time of King Edward's abdication. The whole question was a very intimate one requiring direct contact between the monarch and his various governments. Mr Baldwin, alone of all the prime ministers, was able to go to Fort Belvedere and talk to him privately, but that did not prevent the other premiers from offering their personal advice. The appropriate channels for this were the Governors-General, who not only represented the Crown but also the person of the monarch. Thus the Canadian Cabinet, besides authorising Mr Baldwin to inform the King that they, like the other Dominions, were opposed to the project of the morganatic marriage, sent what might almost be called a private message to the King through Lord Tweedsmuir, to the effect that while they had the deepest sympathy for him personally, they felt that his duty to his throne and his subjects must outweigh all

other considerations. Again, within a few hours of the abdication, Mr Lyons sent a last appeal to the King through the Governor-General imploring him to remain King over Australia. Both these messages were personal rather than formal and, therefore, sent properly through His Majesty's representatives in the Dominions concerned.

The general tendency is, therefore, for the King to be brought nearer to his Dominion governments and to have more say in the choice of his representatives overseas. As far as the office itself is concerned, as the recent visit of Lord Tweedsmuir to the United States has shown, it is far from being a mere 'rubber stamp'.

#### THE JUDICIAL COMMITTEE OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL

From the very earliest times the King, as the superior feudal lord, had the right of administering justice between his subjects. Each of his inferior barons had similar rights in respect of his vassals, while all the shires and towns of England had courts in which disputes were decided according to the custom of the locality. Gradually the King accumulated the control of all justice into his own hands. Men became accustomed to appeal specially to him instead of going to the local courts, and when, as often occurred, custom or Common Law failed to provide a remedy for some particular injury, the subject petitioned the King to use his special powers to put the matter right. This petition might be made through the Chancellor, and from this developed over a great many years the system of Equity administered by the Courts of Chancery; or he might appeal to the King in his Parliament, and the modern appellate jurisdiction of the House of Lords is a

relic of this; or, lastly, one of his subjects overseas might appeal to the King in his Council, and from this has evolved, rather tortuously, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council as it exists to-day.

Previously this part of his jurisdiction belonged to the King by right or prerogative, but by the passing of the Judicial Committee Acts of 1833 and 1844, giving the body power to hear appeals from all colonial courts, it was put on a statutory basis. Its personnel and functions were clearly defined, and it became the supreme court for the overseas possessions of the Crown.

To-day, the Court consists of the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President, the Lords of Appeal, as well as all those who have at any time held one of these high offices. Besides these, the judges of the Supreme Court of England and Court of Session of Scotland, and the judges of the Superior Courts in the Dominions who are Privy Counsellors, are also members. No one can deny the high legal standing of the court or its imperial character, in view of the fact that eminent judges from each of the Dominions automatically belong to it.

The Judicial Committee has, however, been recently the object of a considerable volume of attack by the nationalist opinion overseas on the grounds that it is a relic of British domination. Its real value has been due partly to the fact that it has succeeded, to a certain degree, in keeping the development of the Common Law uniform in the various parts of the Commonwealth where that system exists. Again, it provides in those Dominions having federal constitutions, e.g. Canada and Australia, a final Court of Appeal in matters of constitutional interpretation. On the other hand, the cost of taking a case to the Judicial Committee is very great and usually

outside the means of any except wealthy corporations; while, since the actual attendance of the Dominion judges is comparatively rare, the court has not always the necessary knowledge of local conditions with which to guide its decisions properly.

Shortly after the passing of the Statute of Westminster, the Irish Free State took steps to end the right of appeal, and the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1933, by which this was done, was declared *intra vires* by the Privy Council itself in the case of *Moore v. Attorney-General for the Irish Free State*. Similarly, an Act restricting appeals in a certain class of criminal cases passed by the Canadian Parliament was declared valid in accordance with the latter's increased powers under the Statute of Westminster. In other cases it remains the final Court of Appeal for that Dominion and appeals may be brought with special leave from the Supreme Court of Canada and from the provincial courts of appeal.

In South Africa a limited right exists, though this has only been exercised on a very few occasions. Recently the Hertzog-Smuts Government rejected the proposal for its abolition, on the grounds that while it did not materially affect South African litigation, it was a link with the Mother Country and, therefore, of a certain value. The position in Australia is similar to that in Canada, while the right of appeal from the Supreme Court of New Zealand is practically unrestricted.

In the case of both the federal Dominions the policy of the Judicial Committee has been to protect the powers of the States against encroachments by the Federal Government, and this has caused it to be criticised by those who support increased centralisation. The result has been that a number of cases, not unlike the famous 'New

Deal' legislation recently considered and declared invalid by the Supreme Court of the United States, have come before the Judicial Committee and have met with fates similar to the National Industrial Recovery Acts.<sup>1</sup> The Canadian Government has announced its intention of seeking to amend the Constitution in order to increase their powers. In the case of Australia, on the other hand, a referendum, which was held in March 1937, with a similar object, was rejected decisively by the electorate, with the result that the prestige of the Judicial Committee has been greatly enhanced in the Commonwealth.

Numerous schemes have been suggested in the past for a Court which would take the place of the Judicial Committee and would have a more definitely imperial character. None of them has been, so far, found acceptable, and it is likely that the Judicial Committee will remain the court of appeal for the Commonwealth, as well as for the Empire, for some time to come.

#### INFORMATION

The new independence of the Dominions has caused a huge strain to be put on the old inter-imperial machinery. Before the War Great Britain was able to make decisions for the whole Empire; since the War each Dominion must be consulted before any important step is taken. The current of world affairs runs more rapidly to-day than in 1914 and if the Dominions are to make wise decisions they must be kept informed of what is happening. It did not matter, for instance, whether the Chinese Government

<sup>1</sup> These were: *Canada*, Weekly Rest, Minimum Wages, and Hours of Work Acts, 1935, together with Employment and Social Insurance, 1935, and the Natural Products Marketing Act, 1934. *Australia*, Dried Fruits Acts, 1928-35. These were marketing Acts similar to those introduced in Great Britain since 1931.



knew the facts behind the German re-occupation of the Rhine in March 1936, but it was vitally important that His Majesty's ministers in Canberra should know all the circumstances accompanying it. Though Australia was not a signatory of the Locarno Pact, it was bound to be affected by any action which the French and British Governments thought fit to take.

### *I. Government Departments*

The task of keeping the overseas ministers informed on these matters is given to the Dominions Information Department of the British Foreign Office. It cables to each of the various Ministries of External Affairs information similar to that supplied to the British Cabinet Ministers. Besides this, full dispatches are sent by air or by mail boat, and if the Foreign Office is pretty sure that some particular question is going to be important at some time in the near future, it takes steps to see that the Dominions are fully supplied with all the available information before that event actually occurs.

The Dominions Office itself regularly provides information on subjects of imperial interest, and the various Departments of External Affairs in return send any information in their possession with which they think the United Kingdom Government may not be acquainted.

### *II. High Commissioners*

The danger of faulty communications in times of crisis has been recognised and referred to by all the post-War conferences. It is easy to picture the confusion in the Commonwealth which might result from a sudden emergency demanding quick decisions and quicker action.

The 1926 Conference drew attention to the fact that the new status of the Governors-General left the Dominions without any one able to represent with authority the views of the British Government. To remedy this, it was decided to appoint High Commissioners in the overseas capitals similar to the High Commissioners who have for many years represented the Dominions in London.

The first *High Commissioner from the United Kingdom* was appointed to Canada in 1928, to South Africa in 1930, and to Australia in 1934. In New Zealand the Governor-General still retains his pre-1926 status, while up to the present the British Government is only represented in the Irish Free State by a Trade Commissioner.

The duties of these officials are very similar to those of their counterparts in London. They act as channels of communication between the Imperial Government and the Dominions. Thus, during the abdication crisis, the British High Commissioner in Capetown travelled up to Bloemfontein to acquaint General Hertzog personally with the latest information.

These officials, as representatives of the United Kingdom Government, communicate directly with the Dominions Office, and they act on instructions sent them by the Secretary of State for that department.

Though the appointment of High Commissioners to represent the United Kingdom in the Dominions is a new development, the value of the presence in the imperial capital of some one able to explain orally the views of his government to the British ministers had been realised in Canada as early as 1879. As the result of constant misunderstandings, "there appears", wrote Sir John Macdonald in a memorandum, "to be a danger of a feeling growing up of indifference, if not of actual antagonism

and irritation on both sides". The personal contact provided by the presence of a High Commissioner or Resident Minister would counteract this, and Sir John proposed that one should be appointed without delay. The agreement of the British Government was obtained, and the first Canadian High Commissioner arrived in London in 1880.

Gradually the other Dominions followed this example and by now all are represented in the United Kingdom. These officials have two functions. First, they act as channels of communication between the governments; secondly, they are resident agents for Dominion interests in the Mother Country. Thus they may be required to explain the views of their several governments on any particular problem to the British ministers. Besides that, it is their duty to keep the former acquainted with developments in the internal political situation in Great Britain. They are entrusted with the task of negotiating loans, and with keeping Dominion business interests in touch with the London money market. They control the immigration agencies and the tourist traffic. There are also attached to Canadian and Australian High Commissioners' Offices, military and air force liaison officers, who sometimes serve on the sub-committees of the Committee of Imperial Defence and are in direct touch with the various defence ministries in London.

Although the Dominion High Commissioners are able to explain the views of their governments on particular subjects, they are not able to take any action except on instructions sent them from home. The idea, therefore, of having a 'resident minister' in London responsible to his cabinet overseas, while at the same time able to speak with much more authority than is at present the case

with the High Commissioners, has often been suggested, and on three occasions put into practice.

Thus, following the 1911 Imperial Conference, Sir George Perley was appointed Resident Minister for Canada. Again, during the period when the Imperial War Cabinet was in existence in London, almost every Dominion was represented by a minister who remained in Great Britain for several months in the year. The most recent occasion was when Mr Bruce, an Honorary Minister in the Australian Cabinet, was, in 1932, sent over to London to take over control of the High Commissioner's Office while at the same time retaining his cabinet rank.

Though this experiment has not been repeated, the presence of a resident minister in Great Britain may be tried again some time in the future. If so, there may arise in London an Imperial Council able to speak authoritatively for the different parts of the Commonwealth, and so give a degree of co-ordination to the policies of the various member-nations which does not at present exist. The far-fetched theory that during the abdication crisis Mr Baldwin was acting as chairman of an imaginary Imperial Conference would be translated into fact, and the danger of confusion in the face of any emergency greatly lessened.

#### CONSULTATION

At present the system of imperial consultation, apart from the exchange of views through the medium of the High Commissioners, is confined to direct communication between Prime Ministers and to the Imperial Conferences which are held every four years.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> To this must be added consultations between Dominion ministers on visits home who take the opportunity of meeting various members of the Government, e.g. Mr Pirow in 1936 and Mr Nash in 1937.

*I. Prime Ministers*

In 1918 the Imperial War Cabinet passed a resolution to the effect that in future the Dominion prime ministers should have the right to confer directly with the Prime Minister of Great Britain on any matter of Cabinet importance. The idea that the former should just ring up their colleague in London and discuss with him some important subject over the long-distance telephone has its possibilities, but appears to be seldom used—the reason no doubt being the difficulty of obtaining the necessary privacy.

An example of the value of telephonic communication is shown by an incident which took place at the time of the Abdication. It had already been agreed that Mr Baldwin, in his speech to the House of Commons, and Mr Lyons, in his address broadcast over a national hook-up, should use the same words in announcing the decision of the King. The Australian Premier was due to begin at 12 o'clock, and by 11.30 no cable had been received with the required wording. Mr Lyons' secretary therefore rang up Mr Baldwin at the House of Commons. The Prime Minister answered the call personally, but said that he had not got the manuscript of his speech with him. His private secretary was hurriedly summoned. The latter, who had the speech already prepared, dictated the passage over the 'phone, and this was sent in to Mr Lyons, who was waiting at the microphone, two minutes before he was timed to begin his address.

Again, the Australian High Commissioner in London is accustomed to ring up the Treasurer of the Commonwealth at a particular time each week to acquaint him with developments in the United Kingdom.

Personal consultation is, however, carried on by telegram, and in actual practice the usual channel is between the Dominions Office in London and the various Departments of External Affairs overseas.

## *II. Imperial Conferences*

It is perhaps appropriate that the holding of an Imperial Conference should usually be associated with royal ceremonials. Thus, the first met at the time of the 1887 Jubilee, and the coronations and commemorations of our kings and queens have all been the occasion for the holding of other conferences, right down to the coronation of King George VI. The Diamond Jubilee, 1897, was turned by the energies of Joseph Chamberlain into a great demonstration of imperial unity. On that occasion the Colonial Secretary said that he felt "that there was a real necessity for some better machinery of consultation between the self-governing Colonies and the Mother Country", and it struck him that a Conference similar to the one which they were now holding "might slowly grow to that Federal Council to which we must all look forward as our ultimate ideal".

Though conferences took place at intervals, it was not until 1907 that the practice became at all systematised. In that year it was decided that in future they should be held under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of Great Britain every four years. All the Dominion prime ministers were to be members *ex officio*, but no resolution was to be binding upon any government without its express consent. Simultaneously, a proposal for the establishment of a permanent secretariat was agreed to, though in the meantime the task of keeping the

members in touch with each other was undertaken by the Colonial Office.

The first of what had come to be called Imperial Conferences was held in 1911. Again the question of providing a permanent Imperial Council of State or Federal Council was discussed on the motion of Sir Joseph Ward, the Prime Minister of New Zealand. His suggestion was that where matters of urgency arose, they should be referred to a permanent body consisting of the Dominion High Commissioners in London and the Secretary of State for the Colonies. The words of General Botha in a speech made against the scheme are significant. "It may be", he said, "that the time will arise, when a body of men will come into existence upon which the various parts of the Empire are represented by men elected by the people of the Empire, and it may be that in the years to come these Imperial Conferences which we are holding to-day will be looked upon as a link in the long chain in the evolution of such a body." But he and the majority of the other statesmen present felt that that time was not yet. Even a plan for a standing committee to carry on the work during the intervals between meetings was considered impracticable. Before the next conference was due to meet, the War had broken out, and it was not until 1917 when the War Cabinet of the Empire met in London that any further development took place.

The Imperial War *Cabinet* was a misnomer. Though it had very great influence over the formation of policy, it did not exercise any executive powers: it was not, therefore, in any real sense of the term, a federal council. Each of its members was responsible to his own government, and he was thus unable to take a share in making any binding decision without first obtaining the latter's

express consent. Sir Robert Borden, however, saw, or thought he saw, a huge importance in this piece of constitutional development. "It is not for me", he said, "to prophesy the future significance of these pregnant events; but those who have given thought and energy to every effort for the full constitutional development of the overseas nations may be pardoned for believing that they see therein the birth of a new and greater Imperial Commonwealth."

Like the majority of political prophets, Sir Robert proved wrong. He failed to foresee the wave of nationalism which swept the Empire after the War and which made the Dominions suspicious of any scheme likely to interfere with their domestic affairs. The Imperial Conferences of post-War years have, therefore, been, like the earlier ones, merely periodical meetings between heads of governments to discuss questions of mutual interest, especially those relating to constitutional development and foreign policy.

Since the War only two attempts have been made to give continuity to the Imperial Conference system. In 1924 Mr MacDonald's Government sent a telegram suggesting that, in view of the importance of concerted and speedy action by members of the Commonwealth in the realm of foreign affairs, and, since the defeat of a government at any time during the intervals between Imperial Conferences might render the policy to which it had agreed ineffective, some more permanent machinery of consultation ought to be devised. Though a favourable reply was received from Australia, the Labour Government was immediately afterwards defeated at a general election and the matter was dropped.

In 1930 the Federation of British Industries and the Trades Union Council proposed jointly that "a permanent



Commonwealth Economic Secretariat should be set up with the duty of investigating economic questions and problems affecting the Commonwealth, and preparing the agenda for economic questions at the Imperial Conferences." The proposal, which was discussed at Ottawa in 1932, was eventually opposed in principle by the Irish Free State and South Africa, and consequently came to nothing.

It is perhaps just as well that, in the first flush of enthusiasm after the War, the Commonwealth did not try to put the Imperial Conferences on a permanent basis. The only result would have been a reaction against them, which might have ended by discrediting the whole system. Now that imperial political co-operation is becoming easier, and at the same time more vital, it is likely that some permanent and more suitable machinery will come into being in a way very characteristic of British institutions—by the adaptation of some existing piece of machinery to meet the new need.

#### COMMONWEALTH TRIBUNAL

The proposal for a Commonwealth tribunal first appeared in the report of the 1929 Conference on the Operation of Dominion Legislation. The idea was that a tribunal, something like the Permanent Court of International Justice, should be set up to deal with disputes arising between members of the Commonwealth, which could not be settled by ordinary negotiations.

When this suggestion came before the Imperial Conference, 1930, it was laid down that this court should be set up *ad hoc* to deal with each question as it arose, and that it should consist of five judges: two selected by each

of the disputants and these four to choose a president. It was carefully stated that all of these were to be drawn from within the Commonwealth.

It was suggested that this scheme might be used at the time of the Anglo-Irish annuities dispute, but it was never put into practice, because the Free State insisted that at least one member of the court should be chosen from a foreign country. The British Government refused to agree to this, and the suggestion was dropped. It is perfectly possible, however, should any trouble arise between two members in the Commonwealth again, that the plan might be tried and, in more favourable circumstances, might prove a success.

Out of this tangle of inter-imperial machinery is growing a constitution. The old fabric is slowly being remodelled in the light of experience, and new methods invented as necessity demands. The ghosts of the members of the Federation League may rest quietly in their graves, for the problem which they tried to solve half a century ago is to-day being settled, though in a way very different from the one which they proposed.

The Commonwealth is not a federation, or ever likely to be one. A federal constitution is neither satisfactory nor acceptable, for, as in the case of the United States, the central government would sooner or later be tempted or compelled to meddle in the domestic policy of the member-nations. Since 1926 such an action could have but one result—the breakdown of the whole system of imperial unity.

What is wanted, and what is now being evolved, is some sort of machinery which will enable the Commonwealth

as a whole, with the consent of each of its members, to reach an agreement for common action in those matters which affect them all. The first essential element, therefore, is the supply of information. Unless each government is in full possession of the facts relating to any question, it is unlikely that any unity of policy can be obtained. This is provided by High Commissioners and by the exchange of documents between the Dominions Office and the various Departments of External Affairs. The next stage is reached when the information has been circulated and the moment for consultation arrives. If it is a matter of urgency, this may be done by telegraphic or telephonic communication between government departments or directly between prime ministers. If, however, it is not of immediate importance, the question is held over to the next Imperial Conference, to be discussed and settled there. Lastly, after a decision has been made, it remains for each member of the Commonwealth to carry it out in any way which appears most suitable for the purpose. On occasion it will be left to one particular government or individual to act on behalf of all the member-nations. Thus, at the time of the abdication crisis, all the six governments, after exchange of information and consultation, authorised Mr Baldwin to act for them when tending their advice to the King. But this is the exception rather than the rule. Usually each government acts independently, merely relating its policy to a common theme.

Such is the present peace-time constitution of the Imperial Commonwealth, still so shadowy and ill-formed as to be incapable of proper definition. In war-time it is probable that this extreme flexibility would be tightened up: that a War Cabinet similar to the one which came

into being during 1917 and 1918 would appear again, and would assume control over the general policy of the whole Commonwealth. This fact remains, however: that the Imperial Constitution is still sufficiently elastic to be stretched to meet any state of emergency which may arise.

To dignify this machinery with the title 'constitution' may appear a little premature. It has no single legislature, no single executive, no real judiciary, no sovereign in the Austinian sense. Instead there are six of each—six parliaments, six peoples, which may, and often do, have six policies, but which, in certain circumstances, act in unison through the machinery evolved during these last fifty years. As an institution it "bears no real resemblance to any other political organisation which now exists or has ever yet been tried", as the 1926 Conference said rather complacently. But uniqueness has its drawbacks as well as its advantages, for it demands constant vigilance and imagination, not only on the part of its leaders, but also among the vast mass of men and women in every community in the Commonwealth. There are no sign-posts along the road it has to go; the landmarks are all unfamiliar, the dangers all hidden and unknown: it lacks that element of sureness for which men always strive.

Bereft of the consolation of an adequate legal definition, we have to be content with a statement such as that of one Australian Prime Minister: "It is an empire of the spirit; its bonds are above self-interest or legal exactitudes; its ties defy national or juridical explanations; it is a unity accepted without question, in a fashion so inevitable as to be almost mystical." A definition of this sort would not impress constitutional lawyers, but then the Imperial Commonwealth does not pretend to do so.

Perhaps in some future generation a learned historian will attempt to explain in terms of law and history the workings of the Commonwealth, and having become lost in the obscurity which surrounds it, and being out of tune with the spirit by which it is animated, will be constrained to ejaculate with the man who for the first time saw a giraffe—"I don't believe it's true."

## CHAPTER VIII

### FOREIGN POLICY : SETTLEMENT AND PEACE, 1920-30

**F**EW generations have been more acutely conscious of the significance of their own times than ours. The Press, the radio, and the legions of our publicists have been untiring in their efforts to keep us in touch with the trend of world events during the last twenty-five years. The Great War was still in its final agony when the Russian revolution convulsed a hundred and fifty million people. Since then the flame of revolution has gone leaping and spurting across half the world. We have watched the fall of four great empires, and seen seven kings driven from their thrones. We have witnessed the birth and growth of two rival political systems, and we have seen the nations of the world blow hot and cold over a great project for perpetual peace.

In the early days after the War we were all united in the determination that war should never come again. We were too civilised, we said; the destinies of nations were too closely interwoven, so that a flame which burnt one thread must scorch the whole fabric of our civilisation. Besides, there was the League. We built our hopes on its future. It stood for the reign of law, the elementary principles of morality and fairness which had existed among this people from time immemorial. We threw ourselves whole-heartedly into the task of making it work.

It was, after all, our invention, and ours was the responsibility for making it a success.

For fifteen years after the War imperial foreign policy was intimately linked with the system of collective security. This period divides fairly easily into sections of five years each: 1920-25, during which the chaos of the war years was being liquidated; 1925-30, when the settlement seemed secure; and 1930-35, when the situation, in the diplomatic phrase, began to deteriorate.

The revolution which resulted from the War was not confined to social and economic life. It was equally visible in the realms of international affairs. Men pointed out that the dominance of Europe over the rest of the world had passed with the coming of the League; the piling up of armaments and influence which had resulted from the system of the balance of power was also gone; the sinister effects of secret treaties were counteracted by compulsory registration with the Secretariat at Geneva. Men felt that with the end of the old diplomacy, full of intrigue and backstairs methods, and the substitution for it of the open control of public opinion, the more deadly germs had been expelled from the system of the world.

The first event of these years which affected vitally the whole Empire, was the expiry of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty, 1922. Japan had performed very valuable services during the War by convoying ships in the Mediterranean and keeping the Pacific clear of German raiders. She naturally expected that the treaty would be renewed on its old terms, and Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand were strongly in favour of this being done. Unfortunately the Americans were at the time in the throes of one of their periodical 'yellow peril' scares, and

the United States Senate had passed an Act discriminating against the Japanese in questions of immigration, which the latter found very offensive to their national pride. Canada and Great Britain were anxious that nothing should be done to antagonise the Americans, and it was quite possible that the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty might place the British Empire on the side of Japan should the quarrel with the United States ever lead to war. The treaty was eventually allowed to lapse, and in order to save Japan's face and to provide a settlement in the Pacific, the Washington Agreements were substituted for it.

By the Four-Power Treaty, the British Commonwealth, Japan, the United States, and France agreed to arbitrate in the event of a dispute arising between any of them in that region. At the same time the Nine-Power Treaty was signed, by which all the signatories promised to uphold the principle of the open door for China, or, in other words, not to try to exclude each other from its share in the economic development of that country. Lastly, the Naval Treaty was signed at the same time. It restricted the size of the navies of Great Britain, the United States, and Japan to the ratio of 5:5:3, and thereby prevented the danger of an armaments race between the three great naval powers.

At this conference the Empire had been represented by a composite delegation, since the question of security in the Pacific was essentially an imperial rather than a regional affair. The treaty was signed by the representatives of each of the Dominions, and each of them assumed obligations under it.

The *malaise* in Europe was less easily mended. The question of reparations was developing into the dangerous



situation which ended in the tragedy of the occupation of the Ruhr. Central Europe was enduring terror and ruin with astonishing fortitude. In Italy, Mussolini was soon to lead the march on Rome, Bolshevik Russia was making frightening faces at the world, and the League, still inexperienced and shadowy, stood aghast like Cassius, at the portents which accompanied its birth.

In the midst of this occurred the Charnak incident. The philhellenic Mr Lloyd George had encouraged the Greeks to invade Asia Minor, relying on the complete disorganisation of Turkey to outweigh the inefficiency of the Greek Higher Command. The appearance of Mustapha Kemal, however, upset his calculations. The nationalist army swept the invader ingloriously to the sea; the small British force which was holding the Dardanelles bridge-head at Charnak found itself quite unsupported in the face of a large and jubilant Turkish army imbued with extravagant ideas about driving the foreigner from the land.

There seemed every possibility of war, and Mr Lloyd George telegraphed to the various Dominions to find out if they would support Great Britain in the event of hostilities. Australia and New Zealand immediately replied that they would; South Africa delayed her answer until after the crisis had passed, and Canada wired that it was a matter which must be placed before Parliament and that more information should be sent before this could be done.

It was unfortunate that Mr Lloyd George's pre-War mentality should have caused the question to be asked at all, but the real meaning of the Canadian response was uncomfortably clear. It meant that Canada had refused to take part in any war begun by Great Britain without

previous consent of her own parliament. The automatic obligation to fight where Britain fought was no longer recognised. The theory that in the Commonwealth peace was indivisible, was no longer true.

In this attitude Canada was undoubtedly influenced by the isolationist policy of the United States, which a year or so before had prevented the latter from joining the League. But it was also the logical outcome of the latest development of Dominion status; Canada was an equal of the Mother Country and therefore equally entitled to decide whether she would fight or remain at peace. Mr Lloyd George's epigram at the 1921 Imperial Conference, that there was a time when Downing Street controlled the Empire, but that to-day the Empire controls Downing Street, was more accurate than he had supposed.

Shortly after this Canada again came before the foot-lights of the world stage. She appeared this time at the head of the movement which has been called the first 'flight from sanctions'. It was an attempt to alter Article 10 of the Covenant, by which the territorial integrity of each member of the League is guaranteed by all the others. This Article had stopped the United States from signing the Covenant in 1919, for it implied an obligation to resort to war in defence of any member whose territory was invaded by an aggressor. Although Canada failed to carry her point in the Assembly, her action was considered to have weakened the prestige of the League.

The attempts to strengthen the Covenant were in 1924 the occasion of another display of the new influence of the Dominions in world affairs, this time by Australia and New Zealand. Mr Macdonald and M. Herriot were at that time at the height of their powers. Together they had introduced their celebrated Protocol, the object of

which was to restrengthen the Covenant by defining the 'aggressor' and making arbitration between disputants compulsory. Everything was going splendidly and the League members were just on the point of signing the document when the Japanese delegate Baron Adatci moved an amendment—that every dispute was to be arbitrable even though one party might consider it a point of internal policy. An American correspondent present has described the strange confusion that the Baron's proposal caused in the Assembly. He himself at first failed to see any reason for it until a colleague whispered the word 'immigration'. The Japanese amendment was designed to include a dispute which might arise between themselves and perhaps Australia over any question of immigration. All the Dominion premiers were up in arms. The whole question was eventually referred to committee, and there the Protocol died a lingering and neglected death.

The policy of all the Dominions at this time was directed towards escaping from any entanglement which might land them in a European war, especially from the obligations of the sanctions clause of the Covenant. Even General Smuts, who had never been a strong supporter of Articles 10 and 16, which alone supplied the breath of life to an otherwise inanimate corpse, agreed that Dominion opinion was hardening against them.

In the meantime the situation in Europe was improving. Franco-German antagonism had died down with the beginning of the evacuation of the Ruhr and the entrance of Herr Stresemann to power. The Dawes Plan had cut the Gordian knot of reparations. At the end of 1925 the signature of the Locarno Treaty strengthened the forces of peace to a far greater extent than any number of

Protocols could have done. In this, however, the Dominions played no part. They were not represented at the negotiations and therefore, in accordance with the procedure laid down at the 1923 Imperial Conference, were not burdened with its obligations. In actual fact New Zealand offered to sign the treaty, and at the 1926 Imperial Conference the British Government were congratulated on this contribution to world peace. The Dominion premiers, however, must have realised that their countries were affected by Great Britain's new obligations almost as seriously as if they had signed the treaty themselves.

The Irish Free State played but a small part in these events. Her principal achievement—if it can be called that—was the registration of the Anglo-Irish Treaty, 1921, with the Secretariat of the League. The British Government protested against this action on the grounds that an agreement between members of the British Commonwealth of Nations was not a treaty within Article 19 of the Covenant. The Secretariat decided to register both the treaty and the protest and the matter was dropped.

The chief characteristic of these years of pacification was the new tendency of the Dominions to act independently of the Mother Country in matters of foreign policy, and the increasing reluctance of Canada, and to a lesser extent of South Africa, to involve themselves in anything which might draw them into a foreign war. Great Britain's energies were directed towards trying to make the system of collective security work, and to produce a feeling of confidence throughout the world in which alone economic and material reconstruction could be carried on. At the close of the year 1925 it seemed that her object had been achieved.

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During the years between 1925 and 1931 it looked as though the dove of peace had come home to roost. The Locarno settlement begat a new sense of security in Europe. A stream of British and American loans were being transfused into the impoverished economic system of Central Europe; as a result of it a remarkable, if superficial, recovery was taking place. The flames of revolution had dwindled to the merest flicker. Statesmen began to congratulate each other on having found in the Treaty of Locarno the elixir of perpetual peace. Sir Austen Chamberlain received, as Professor Keith remarked, the Order of the Garter from the hands of his grateful sovereign.

By 1926 the Preparatory Commission of the Disarmament Conference was beginning to tackle, almost light-heartedly, the question of reducing the armaments of the world to their irreducible minimum. Eighteen months later this mood of optimism reached its climax in the American project of the Kellogg Pact. This scheme to 'outlaw war' originated, appropriately enough, in the minds of a pair of college professors and was eventually signed by all the nations of the world; Great Britain making the reservation that she would fight in the defence of certain spheres intimately connected with her imperial interests.

The naïveté of the scheme took the whole of Europe by surprise. The French, who probably had less than any one else been soothed into a state of pleasant complacency by the fair breezes of Locarno, were particularly aghast at the idea that a slip of paper could stand as a solid wall between them and danger. The Americans alone were thoroughly satisfied with this contribution to the cause of world peace.

During these years, when disarmament was the fashion

and the League was at the height of its powers, imperial defence occupied very little attention. The 1923 Conference had laid down a number of principles which were intended to guide the policies of the various governments. In the first place, each member was to be strong enough to defend itself against an aggressor until help arrived from the Mother Country. It was an obvious corollary to this that the lines of communication must be kept open for the passage of trade and troops. This duty fell to the British Navy and the Conference emphasised the importance of maintaining it at the strength allowed by the Washington Treaty.

From a strategic point of view the Empire provides a formidable problem for effective defence. It sprawls like a stricken giant across the world, vulnerable at a dozen different points, depending partly upon its power and prestige and partly the forbearance of others for its protection. The Conference pointed out that these principles produced three conclusions. First, the essential importance of Singapore as a naval base, without which it would be impossible for any adequate British fleet to operate in the Pacific. Secondly, the maintenance of our control over the Mediterranean, which provides a safe and speedy transport to troops to any point in the East which might be threatened. Lastly, there was the necessity for protecting Great Britain, and more especially London, from air attack. Whatever might be the material havoc resulting from the bombing of London, the psychological effects would be far more disastrous. The destruction of the metropolis would cause to-day the same bewilderment and fear as the sack of the 'eternal City' did on the Roman world fifteen centuries ago. That is and must remain the key to all imperial defence.



While the huge burden of protecting these vital points required the maintenance of great military and naval forces, the British Government supported by the Dominions was taking part in the general disarmament movement which was at that time in full swing. The extent of this movement in Great Britain has been frequently emphasised. In 1913 she had 168 battleships and cruisers in commission and 27 being built, while in 1930 the figures were 73 and 4. In the case of the Army the reduction in personnel had been from 186,000 to 148,000—this latter figure being just sufficient to meet the necessities of garrison duty overseas and the scanty requirements of home defence. As far as the provision of an expeditionary force for service on the mainland of Europe was concerned, neither the necessity nor the possibility of having to dispatch such an army was considered as part of the problem of imperial defence.

The individual policies of the Dominions are referred to later. The general principle lying behind these was that the equipment and training of all the Dominion forces should be developed on lines as similar to those of Great Britain as the different circumstances in each Dominion allowed. The object was that, should the occasion ever occur, the co-operation between the fighting forces of the various members of the Commonwealth would proceed speedily and smoothly.

It was with the idea of facilitating this that the Committee of Imperial Defence, which had come into being before the War, was reorganised in 1924. Its function have always been advisory and not executive, and it has dealt primarily with the policy of the Imperial Government rather than with the Dominions. At the same time the military and air force liaison officers attached to the

staffs of the High Commissioners in London attend the meetings of its sub-committees, and Dominion ministers, as in the case of Mr Pirow, the South African Minister of Defence, in 1936, occasionally come over to consult with it on matters of outstanding importance.

The general tendency during these years was to neglect the problem of imperial defence in the hope that the League of Nations would provide the necessary protection for our interests. Such a policy was tempting but unwise, as the next few years were to prove. The flimsy character of the structure of collective security, already partly exposed by the Japanese Manchurian escapade in 1931, was to be shown in its complete nakedness by the Italian adventure in Abyssinia four years later.

## CHAPTER IX

### FOREIGN POLICY: THE BREAK-UP

1930-35

**T**HE bright days soon ended. The first cloud, which was very much bigger than a man's hand, cut the quiet Locarno horizon in September 1930, when the Nazi Party won 107 seats in the Reichstag. Their policy, still unelaborated, showed all the features calculated to overturn the European apple-cart in the shortest possible time. Gone was Herr Stresemann's policy of fulfilment by which he had hoped, and to a great extent succeeded, to soften the settlement of Versailles. In its place was a programme strongly nationalist and packed with all those militarist characteristics against which France had been either actively or passively in conflict for the past twenty years.

Almost simultaneously the first grumblings of the economic storm were heard. Wall Street had crashed spectacularly in the autumn of 1929, leaving the United States numb and panic-stricken. The first repercussions of this appeared in Europe when, in May 1931, the Austrian Credit-Anstalt was discovered to be on the edge of bankruptcy and when, a few weeks later, the withdrawal of foreign funds from German banks assumed alarming proportions. By September Great Britain had been caught in the tempest and had been forced off the gold standard. Australia and New Zealand, on the other side of the world, were both faced with the possibility of having to default, and the rising tide of unemployment

together with the progressive fall in the price of primary products was a feature to be found in every country in both hemispheres.

Just at the moment when the economic pack of cards was toppling, Japan chose to strike a shrewd blow at the structure of peace. In September 1931 some unknown persons conveniently blew up the railway line outside Mukden in Manchuria, and this gave the Japanese Army an excuse to begin the 'mission of pacification' which ended five months later in the appearance of the Japanese 'protected state' of Manchukuo upon the map of the world.

The failure of the League to deal effectively with this act of blatant aggression exposed the weakness of the collective security system, and shortly afterwards world confidence was again shaken by the sterility shown during the debates at the long-heralded Disarmament Conference which met in 1932. Signor Madariaga has cast Great Britain as the 2nd Villain in his story of the murder of peace.<sup>1</sup> In all discussions of disarmament, Great Britain had emphasised her intention of fighting in defence of her spheres of interest, which meant in effect those regions which were of vital importance to her system of imperial defence: included in these are Egypt and the Suez Canal, and probably the Dutch East Indies, and the Iraq oil fields.

Whatever may have been the effects of Sir John Simon's icy logic upon the flatulent idealism of the Conference, the chances of disarmament had died in 1930 when the signs of the impending revival of German militarism first appeared. With the uprising of the National Socialist

<sup>1</sup> The U.S.A. is curiously enough chosen for the title role. *Disarmament*, by Salvatore de Madariaga,

Party, all France's old fears came flocking back like the black crows in the fairy story. From that time on she began the search for new safeguards for her security which was to lead her, not down the road to disarmament, but to the armed Franco-Soviet Pact.

In spite of the mood of fear and despair which was overtaking the world, Great Britain and the Dominions still remained faithful to their conception of the system of collective peace. If their common sense prevented them from staking everything upon its success, they showed themselves willing to hazard a great measure of security in its support.

In 1933 an unofficial Conference at Toronto was able to state that one of the two chief principles of imperial foreign policy was the support of collective security and the League of Nations, and two years later Sir Samuel Hoare in his speech to the League Assembly at the beginning of the Italo-Abyssinian War repeated the same thing with all the influence of a united Commonwealth behind him.

The second principle decided on at the Conference was the maintenance of friendship with the United States. It is sometimes forgotten that we have fought two wars with our American cousins and that in 1915, if Colonel House is to be believed, we were very near fighting a third. Upon the friendship of America, the safety of Canada largely depends and the continued presence of their fleet in the Philippine Islands acts as a shield for Australia against any aggression from the north. Above all, the freedom to make use of their financial resources and the immense powers of their industrial production in time of war is of supreme importance to the Commonwealth. It was on account of this that the 1937 Neutrality

Act with its 'cash and carry' principle is so important to Great Britain. While we remain in control of the seas in any European war and therefore are able to carry supplies from the United States in our own ships, the resources of that country are at our disposal so long as our realisable investments hold out. As these at present amount to \$300,000,000 (approx.) this will be for some considerable time. Incidentally, as Mr Walter Lippman has pointed out, it is impossible for America to remain strictly neutral if the British Commonwealth of Nations goes to war. For while her resources are at the disposal of the country which can impose a naval blockade, she must either be the economic ally of the latter or become her active adversary. Such is the dilemma upon one of the horns of which the American nation may one day find itself again impaled.

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By the beginning of 1934 only three of the seven great powers, the British Empire, France, and Italy, remained members of the League of Nations. It seemed obvious that while the Covenant was attached to the Treaty of Versailles, Germany's return was unlikely; Japan was engaged in an enterprise which was scarcely compatible with her League obligations. The United States was prevented from joining by the fact that adherence to the Covenant meant the chance of being caught in a European war; while Soviet Russia was not yet considered sufficiently respectable to be allowed to consort with other powers at Geneva.

When one considers the patent weakness of the League it is astonishing that twelve months later, the British Commonwealth was attempting to impose the full measure

of sanctions against one of the remaining members (Italy), in spite of the obvious reluctance of the other (France), and only supported whole-heartedly by the newly admitted U.S.S.R., a country whose motives were still suspect to a large section of the nation.

All through 1934 the stories of extensive German re-armament were beginning to cause uneasiness in Europe. The picturesque imagination of publicists like Mr Wickham Steed surprised the average man with stories of the homicidal qualities of contraptions stored in Berlin cellars. The full implications of the Reich Government's activities came into full view when, early in 1935, Herr Hitler announced that he intended to take no further notice of the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaty and that he proposed to raise the Reichswehr from 100,000 to 550,000.

The immediate reaction of France, Great Britain, and Italy to this announcement was to draw closer together and to form the so-called Stresa front in April 1935. Like so many international understandings, this contained the seeds of its own destruction. For it was at this very Conference that M. Laval gave Signor Mussolini to understand that in the event of Italy attacking Abyssinia, France would take no action.

The first apparent dent to the front, however, was made by Great Britain when, in June 1935, she signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement. As a few weeks before she had joined with her two other Stresa friends in passing a resolution in the Assembly of the League condemning Germany's repudiation of the part of the Versailles Settlement, her action in signing the Naval Agreement was considered not unreasonably to condone the expansion of the German Navy, which was also contrary to the Peace Treaty. The object of this agreement was to

remove the possibility of another naval armaments race, such as the one which the Kaiser's pre-War policy had produced, and which led directly to the participation of Great Britain in the 'World Crisis'. The value of this treaty to the Commonwealth, in the event of its being observed, must continue to be immense. By it, the strength of the German Navy is limited to 35 per cent of that of Great Britain, while its submarine strength must not exceed 45 per cent. The imperial fleet thus should be able to maintain its predominance in two of the three regions in which we have interests and, as it is unlikely that we will ever fight without allies, it should be possible with their help to control the third.

The Stresa front, already greatly weakened by the Naval Agreement, was finally dissolved by the beginning of the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.

The implications of this last partition of Africa were far-reaching both for the Collective System and the Imperial Commonwealth. It proved that it was possible to get unanimity among the various British governments at a time of crisis. It gave a warning of the enormous care which must be exercised by the United Kingdom Government in forming its foreign policy. It showed the weakness in our system of inter-imperial consultation. It taught the various members of the Commonwealth one all-important lesson, that 'collective security' was another name for 'collective war'.

Up to the moment of Sir Samuel Hoare's speech on September 11th 1935 no one seems to have known what was to be done to deter Italy from the war or whether she ought to be discouraged at all. After the Foreign Secretary's pronouncement, however, there was no further doubt that Great Britain intended to test the powers of the



Covenant to suppress aggression. "On behalf of the United Kingdom Government," he said, "I can say that they will be second to none in this intention to fulfil within the measure of their capacity the obligations which the Covenant lays upon them." But, he added, "if risks for peace are to be run, they must be run by all". The effect of this speech on the League was like brandy upon a half-drowned man. There was an immediate rally to the Covenant. By November 18th Italy had been declared the aggressor and the first economic sanctions had come into force.

The reactions to these events were more or less uniform throughout the Commonwealth.

Generally speaking, Canada had taken little interest in foreign affairs. Geographically she was remote from the suspicions of the old world and from the complexities of the Far East. A strong French-Canadian minority eagerly supported any policy which tended towards isolation and until 1935 the Canadian public was more or less content to leave the Government to go its own way. The events of 1935, however, awoke them to the real meaning of their country's new status. When the Abyssinian crisis began, public opinion in Canada could be roughly divided into three sections: first, the 'old type' imperialists who were anxious to throw their lot in with the Mother Country regardless of the consequences; then those who were willing to follow the lead of the British Government provided it was acting in fulfilment of its League obligations; and, lastly, those who may be called 'die-hard isolationists'. The exact sizes of these sections are impossible to estimate, but there is no doubt that the first two greatly outnumbered the third.

As far as Canada was concerned, she was anxious above

all to keep out of a war. But if any war came she was more willing to join in a war fought in defence of League obligations than in one engaged in by Great Britain from motives of national policy. Like all the smaller nations she wished to see if the machinery of the League really worked: therefore she supported the British Government.

The same ignorance of foreign affairs was to be found in Australia. The people had not yet grown accustomed to thinking for themselves, and a vast majority were willing to follow Great Britain's lead in a crisis. Probably few Australians even realised that their country had a seat on the Council of the League. On the whole, the strength of the British Navy was considered a more sufficient safeguard than the collective security system. While there was a certain volume of support for the Labour Party campaign against sanctions and in favour of Australian neutrality, Mr Lyons undoubtedly had the greater part of the country behind him, when he said that Australia would support Britain in whatever course she thought would be best for the future of the Commonwealth of Nations.

Probably in no Dominion was the significance of the Italian policy better understood than in South Africa. An attack by a white race upon a coloured people was bound to have serious effects on her domestic problems whichever side won. Again, there was the danger that the successful aggression by a European power upon an African state might encourage another to try its luck, and South Africa was deeply conscious that she offered an almost irresistible temptation to any dissatisfied power, especially to the one which until 1914 had been her next-door neighbour—'a Naboth's vineyard', as General Smuts called her in one of his speeches. A strong system of

collective security, especially if successful in preventing aggression by a European country in Africa, would provide her with ideal protection. Consequently right from the beginning she supported to her utmost the policy of the Mother Country.

The same was true of the Irish Free State. As an independent signatory of the Covenant, Mr de Valera announced that the Irish Government intended to fulfil all its obligations to the League. The unusual, but most desirable, result of this was that, during the whole of the episode, Mr de Valera's Government co-operated with that of Great Britain both in the condemnation of Italy and the imposition of sanctions. In his speeches at Geneva, both as President of the Council and as representative of his country, Mr de Valera has shown a toleration and broadmindedness which is a strange contrast to the bigotry he has displayed in other matters. It is typical of the outlook of the extremists in the Free State, that when their Government took its stand with the rest of the Commonwealth in fulfilment of its obligations, it was bitterly attacked by the die-hard Republicans for agreeing with the old enemy, even in a matter as remote from the domestic relations of Great Britain and the Free State as was the imposition of sanctions against Italy.

As far as the fifth Dominion, New Zealand, was concerned, she was still intent on following the Mother Country in whatever action she thought fit to take, even at the risk of being involved in a war.

Support of 'collective security' therefore provided the whole of the Commonwealth with a united policy during this critical period. It formed what the *Round Table* called, perfectly accurately, an additional and essential bond of Empire. The announcement of the Hoare-Laval

plan in December, which appeared in the Dominions to be a complete betrayal of the League and Abyssinia, shook profoundly this sense of unity. Anything which gave the impression that the Mother Country was acting in her own interests inevitably aroused a considerable volume of opinion against further co-operation with her in her foreign policy. Few men or women in the Dominions knew the nature of the problems with which the British Government was faced; indeed, even at home, the Cabinet would not divulge the true extent of the danger to such a responsible body as the House of Commons. There is no doubt that if the Hoare-Laval proposals had not been quickly reversed, the effect on imperial unity would have been disastrous.

The importance of the League in maintaining this unity between the various members of the Commonwealth, though sometimes over-estimated, was no doubt very great. It gave to the decisions of the Dominions an independence which they could scarcely otherwise have had. It provided them with protection which made them less dependent on the armed forces of Great Britain. Above all, it offered them what they wanted more than anything else—prolonged peace. In view of these things it is obvious why both South Africa and New Zealand were so loath to remove sanctions and admit defeat. It would undoubtedly be a great addition to the strength of the Commonwealth if some spark of life could be breathed into the dry bones of the League.

Had the League policy been a success, and had the Abyssinians held out until the economic structure of Italy collapsed under the dual strain of war and sanctions, the problems which the future foreign policy of the British Commonwealth would have had to face, would have

been comparatively simple. Unhappily this was not so. Instead, Italy got away with the swag, Germany, encouraged by the embarrassment of the sanctionist powers, marched into the Rhine, and the world found itself faced with a situation which bore a grim resemblance to the months just before the Great War.

It was the new fear of Germany which united the Commonwealth, momentarily split over the question of removal of sanctions. Robbed of the unifying influence of the obligations of collective security, the Commonwealth has once again been united by the necessity for imperial defence. Where the League and Articles 10 and 16 stood, now stands once again the Imperial Navy. It remains to be seen whether His Majesty's ships-of-war are a more powerful deterrent to a potential aggressor than were the resolutions of the Committee of Thirteen or the votes of the full Assembly of the League of Nations.

## CHAPTER X

### FOREIGN POLICY: RETURN TO ARMS, 1936-7

**I**T is doubtful whether during the last twenty years international politics have not really depended upon power. The League was perhaps always an alliance to maintain the Versailles settlement, and depended for its prestige upon the supremacy of the armed forces of the allied nations, rather than upon a new and higher conception of the value and virtue of international co-operation. Whether this is true or not, to-day power politics is supreme in the three zones which the 1923 Imperial Conference emphasised as being fundamental to the British Empire. In north Europe, the safety of Great Britain is a question of the relative strength of the countries situated round the North Sea. In the Mediterranean, the balance rests between the British and Italian navies. In the Pacific, the growing strength of Singapore, the last imperial fortress at the turning-point of Asia, faces the Japanese Navy. It is significant that against all of our most vital and most vulnerable points stands a possible aggressor. What is even more disturbing, is the fact that the relations between Great Britain and each of those three Great Powers have, within the last five years, been tinged with enmity. A conflict of interest with Japan in China, another with Italy in East Africa, and a third with Germany over the colonial question, have changed the whole aspect of the

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international situation as far as the Commonwealth is concerned.

In each case the point at issue is far removed from the coasts of Great Britain. The threat, if threat exists, touches the whole structure of the Empire. If there is a pistol levelled at the heart of England, there is a knife at the back of South Africa and the throat of Australasia and at India's head. It is not a simple question of the integrity of the Low Countries. Defence to-day is imperial in its widest sense. Though war, if war does come, may find its battlefields in Europe, its causes and its dangers lie in countries far away.

The Government had first tried to draw the attention of the British public to the fact that the armed forces of the Crown were no longer sufficient to carry out its commitments to the League and to provide an effective defence for Great Britain and the Empire, in a White Paper issued in March 1935. But public opinion still clung to the dear illusion that the League provided protection on the cheap. The crude but elementary necessities of defence were little appreciated. The citizen's conception of the requirements of national service was too often confined to the thoughtless signing of the Peace Ballot and the punctual payment of his subscription to the League of Nations Union.

The events of November 1935 and March 1936 had the effect of alarm-clocks on a heavy sleeper. War, which had seemed impossible for fifteen years, was not only possible, but was actually being fought. Pictures of slaughtered Abyssinians had more realism than the voices of prophets, who were without honour both in their own country and everywhere else. The blatant deficiencies of His Majesty's forces were plain for all except the intentionally

blind to see. The tale of the gun wrenched from its retirement in the Imperial War Museum to see service once again on the Alexandrine foreshore was comic, but disturbing. Then, shortly afterwards, as if to rub the lesson home, came a sound faintly familiar to the ears of many—the tramp of German troops and the rumble of their lorries across the Rhineland bridges. The French had heard the same noise some twenty years before, and in a panic manned their great defences. For a moment it seemed that their General Staff might procure the mobilisation which they desired, but the Government hesitated, and the crisis passed, leaving behind it the torn-up shreds of another scrap of paper and a sense of insecurity even in the more remote regions of the world.

Four days before the German troops occupied the demilitarised zone, the British Government issued a second White Paper on defence. Its opening paragraphs set out the circumstances which now led the Government to enter upon a policy of rearming to the level of the requirements which her world responsibilities imposed upon her. It had only been possible during the Italian War, it pointed out, "to safeguard the position in the Mediterranean and Red Sea by denuding other areas to an extent which might have involved grave risks". The dangers of such a situation were obvious, and the Government had made up its mind that the defences of the country "should be high enough to enable us to exercise the influence and authority in international affairs which are alike required for the defence of vital British interests, and in the application of the policy of collective security". Under the impulse of those two considerations and of the threats contained in the "violent and menacing

propaganda" in Italy directed against the United Kingdom, and in the astronomical figures of German expenditure on rearmament, the Government announced its resolve to proceed immediately with a defence programme such as the circumstances rendered necessary.

A year later, in February 1937, the Government issued a third White Paper. It was no longer concerned with making apologies for its programme. It contained the announcement, and also the knell of the taxpayer, that Great Britain intended to spend £1,500,000,000 on bringing her forces up to date. The elaboration of mechanical equipment and the huge deficiencies which had been piling up over the preceding years were the reasons for this huge expenditure. The combined programmes of 1936 and 1937 for the Navy consist of 5 capital ships, 14 cruisers, and 2 aircraft carriers. Besides this, the Army, whose equipment had a Boer War touch about it, is to be modernised, and the Air Force expanded to perform its dual function of providing for home defence and for operations over long distances abroad. Behind this, under the direction of the new Minister for the Co-ordination of Defence, a scheme of shadow factories is to be set up. All this has been or is in the process of being done.

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Meantime, by the summer of 1936, the international situation had begun to present a pretty spectacle of desolation. The old landmarks—the Treaty of Locarno, the Covenant of the League, and the Washington Naval Agreement—had disappeared. In March the British public had felt strangely hopeful. On the Monday after the Rhineland episode *The Times* had featured a leading article

entitled "A Chance to Rebuild", which was an optimistic and reasoned argument in favour of a new settlement for western Europe. But unhappily, as was soon discovered, the foundation of mutual confidence, on which alone such a settlement could be constructed, was absent—the only rebuilding which appeared practicable was that of their armed forces.

An attempt was made at the 1936 London Naval Conference to find some substitute for the Washington Agreement, which had been denounced by Japan at the beginning of 1935. The Japanese, with sullen obstinacy derived from a chronic inferiority complex, stuck to their demand for parity with U.S.A. and the Commonwealth, and on being refused, flung out of the Conference in January. Discussions between the representatives of the four other powers, U.S.A., France, Italy, and the Imperial Commonwealth, continued, and resulted in the signature of a new treaty in March by representatives of the first three countries—Italy abstaining on account of the "abnormal situation in the Mediterranean". The treaty was more a gesture than a serious attempt at naval limitation; its principal features were the restriction of capital ships to 35,000 tons and the setting-up of a zone of non-construction between 8,000 and 17,500 tons. For the rest, the race for competitive armaments was left open to all.

Ineffective as this attempt to replace the Washington Treaty was, the efforts to find a new Locarno and to strengthen the Covenant proved even less fruitful. The Council of the League which met in London immediately after the Rhineland episode under the chairmanship of Mr S. M. Bruce, the Australian High Commissioner, discovered without much difficulty that the German action

was a breach of the treaty, but in view of the fact that the British as a whole sympathised with Germany and the Italians were in no position to contemplate another campaign, decided to do nothing. The staff conversations between French and British military chiefs were the only warlike repercussions which took place. Herr Hitler's proposals,<sup>1</sup> which had accompanied his denunciation of the Locarno Treaty, were ignored, and another mile or so was added to the journey through the Desert of Lost Opportunities, along which we have travelled since the end of the War. Only a single statesman, far removed from the fears and fulminations of Europe, saw the possibilities which the situation offered. "I hope", said General Smuts, "that Europe will take Herr Hitler at his word. . . . When we condemn Germany's high-handed action do not let us forget that the German Government has simultaneously made far-reaching proposals for the peace of the world; if the proposals can be worked out, if we can get an Air Pact in western Europe, the greatest danger of war to-day—air attacks on cities and the slaughter of civilians—will be removed. Herr Hitler has offered twenty-five years of peace in Europe. No such offer has ever been made before."<sup>2</sup>

But General Smuts's hopes went unfulfilled. There was nothing to fill the gap which the decease of Locarno had caused. Western Europe was precipitated into the general uncertainty of the remainder of that restless continent, and the League, now that final proof of its impotence in a naughty world had been given, was left to discover, if it

<sup>1</sup> The German Chancellor had offered:

- i. Twenty-five years' non-aggression pacts with France, Belgium and Holland.
- ii. Return of Germany to the League.
- iii. Air pact for Western Europe.

<sup>2</sup> Mowat, *Europe in Crisis*, p. 71.

could, some political elixir, to change to youth and beauty its premature decay.

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The significance of what was happening was not lost on the Dominions. An Australian paper commented on the announcement of Great Britain's intention to rearm, that she was now speaking in a language which Europe and Asia understood. The defencelessness of the Mother Country had caused them uneasiness, and to this had been added of late the realisation that another war would not arise from some chance event in an obscure Balkan country, but would come as the climax of a long and carefully constructed policy of national expansion. The tendency of recent moves in foreign affairs had been to denude the Dominions of some of their false sense of isolation. Italy, in Africa, had drawn the Union into the danger area; insecurity in the Mediterranean had shown Australasia that her future was affected by events and policies about which the public knew little and cared less: lastly, the appearance of the German demand for colonies showed them that war was not merely due to the blind unreason of mad old Europe, but to forces which were being generated in mighty nations and which were beyond the powers of reason to control.

The demand for colonies, so similar to the Kaiser's cry "for a place in the sun", was a conscious adaptation of the arguments used by Italy to justify her policy in East Africa. In December, General von Epp, the President of the German Colonial Society, had delivered a speech in which the claim made its first formal appearance. A few days later General Goering, in an address which contained the famous and appropriate phrase: "Metal

makes an Empire strong: butter only makes people fat", outlined the now well-known economic arguments in favour of their return. Reporting this event in a small and obscure paragraph, *The Times* Berlin Correspondent said that it was possible "that a big campaign on the colonial question is about to begin throughout the country". He was right. During the first half of 1936 the campaign increased in force and ingenuity. Articles were displayed in the Berlin shops labelled "from our old African Colonies"; a liner was named Windhoek after the pre-War capital of German South-west; the Colonial Society was superseded by a Colonial Department of the Nazi Party organisation.

The reasons advanced for rendition were three-fold. First, to obtain a supply of necessary raw materials; secondly, as outlets for population; and, lastly, on grounds of prestige. The first two are of questionable merit even when propounded by the shrewd Dr Schacht, but the last is more sinister. A great power must have a world, and not merely a continental, influence. That influence depends primarily upon the possession of strategic bases from which pressure may be exerted in any region of the world. Strategic bases overseas must necessarily be situated in colonies. This argument affected all the Dominions except Canada and the Irish Free State, both as holders of mandates from the League and as countries which had known the meaning of the presence of German influence in their vicinity before the War.

It was under the pressure of these developments, and following the lead of the Mother Country, that the Dominions, so long indifferent to the requirements of imperial security, turned to make such preparations for their own defence as lay within their power.

South Africa, under the energetic and Teutonic Mr Pirow, began a programme which now provides her with an adequate measure of military protection. Her problems have been twofold. First, the defence of the Cape peninsula from sea attack, and, secondly, the protection of her northern frontiers from a land invasion. The first has become much more likely since it has been recognised that in another European war merchant shipping may be excluded from the Mediterranean and may have to make the longer journey round the Cape. For the protection of the two harbours of Capetown and Durban she relies principally upon the squadron of the Imperial Navy stationed at Simonstown. If this were to be withdrawn or defeated, even the great guns mounted round Table Bay would never protect the city from an enemy fleet. That General Hertzog realises the value of the Imperial Navy to South Africa, is shown by one of the most remarkable speeches of his career. In the House of Assembly, he said: "When I was in opposition and fought for our freedom, I made no secret of my feeling that if the British fleet went under to-morrow it would not matter to me. But now that our freedom has been restored to us, and the enemy of former days has become our best friend, the British Navy means just the same to me as it does to an Englishman or to the British people in England. . . . I cannot have the same love for it as an Englishman; that is impossible. But as far as its value is concerned, I feel the same about it as an Englishman does, because the freedom of my people and my country is just as dependent upon it as England is herself. . . ."<sup>1</sup> The world has travelled a long way since 1912 to enable the gallant general to make such a statement.

<sup>1</sup> *The Round Table*, June 1935.



As far as the northern frontier of the Union is concerned the problems are different. South Africa, as the largest white state in the continent, considers herself the potential champion of the other European populations. If Britain's frontier is the Rhine, hers is the Congo, and she envisages the possibility of having to march to the defence of some northern colony threatened by the black armies of a European power. With this probability in mind and in view of the patent impossibility of erecting permanent defences along her northern frontiers, she has concentrated on developing her air force and on building up a highly mechanised army, which will provide her with the means of speedy action, when and if the necessity should arise. She aims at creating an air force of 250 first-line planes and 1,000 pilots, and an army, fully equipped, of 56,000 organised as an Active Citizen Force.

South African ministers have repeated *ad nauseam* their refusal to take part in any centralised scheme of imperial defence. The contribution, however, which they do make under the Smuts-Churchill Agreement, 1922, and which is all the British Government have ever asked of them, is the maintenance of the Simonstown naval base—a strategic point which, if the Mediterranean is ever closed to British shipping, will become of high importance.

The other two Dominions which have been brought into physical contact with the realities of the international situation by the German claim for colonies, and by recent events in the Mediterranean, are Australia and New Zealand. Both, as we have noticed, have taken little note of foreign affairs. Fear of a Japanese invasion does not cause the good people of Sydney or Auckland many sleepless nights, though it may occasionally provide their statesmen with a horrid nightmare. For between them

and the 'yellow men' lies the United States' fleet in the Philippines, the British in Singapore, and the Dutch in the Spice Islands.

Australia has, however, been more conscious than any other Dominion of the essential interdependence of imperial defence, for she has traditionally placed her reliance upon the Navy. While Great Britain can maintain a squadron of sufficient size in the East, the key to her defences is Singapore. Once Singapore has been lost, Australia would be forced to rely on her own resources under the threat of a complete naval blockade. Since 1911, with the dual object of contributing to the British Navy and of providing themselves with some measure of naval protection, the Australians have been building up a unit of their own. In 1933 the then Minister of Defence, Sir George Pearce, announced that the Government intended to maintain a fleet of four cruisers and five destroyers. At the same time the vulnerability of nearly all her centres of industry and great cities to air attack from the sea has led her to develop her air force. The extent of Australia's rearmament is shown by the increase in her defence budget from £4,500,000 in 1933 to £8,500,000 in 1937.

In New Zealand the problems of defence and foreign policy are even more remote than in Australia. Twelve hundred miles of open sea divide her from the latter, and she is ten times as far from Europe. She has always considered herself as an integral part of the imperial defence system, and her preparations, such as they are, have been made on that assumption.

Until 1930, training with the N.Z. Territorial Force was compulsory for every male, but this was suspended in that year by the Forbes Government as a libation to its

anti-militarist supporters, and in the months of economic retrenchment which followed, the provisions made for its maintenance on a voluntary basis were so inadequate as to render it almost worthless. In spite of her troubles, however, New Zealand did carry out her promise to give £1,000,000 towards the construction of the base at Singapore.

The aeroplane, though it may have complicated modern warfare, has proved a godsend to those Dominions which have to face the problem of protecting great stretches of country with small resources of man-power. New Zealand, after the visit of Sir Maurice Hankey in 1935, decided to concentrate upon the development of her air force and to try to provide a small expeditionary force of some 5,000 men, ready to take their place in the imperial scheme of defence, should the necessity ever arise. Recently a number of young New Zealanders have taken short-service commissions in the R.A.F. The present Government, in spite of the *naïveté* displayed in some of Mr Savage's speeches, have shown their willingness to co-operate with Great Britain in its defence policy. Its aim at the moment is to maintain in the Dominion five hundred trained pilots ready to serve with any imperial force.

Canada's attitude is also largely determined by her geographical position. Situated as she is under the shadow of the Monroe doctrine and able to rely on the strength of the United States as well as the British Navy, her problems of defence seemed almost non-existent. The development of the air, however, has modified her pleasant isolation, for it is conceivable, though unlikely, that a hostile air force might operate against her eastern or western shore, or against shipping on the congested routes along those coasts. At the same time, as in the case of

the other Dominions, the aeroplane has enabled her to concentrate an effective fighting force at any point which happens to be threatened at very short notice. The Government took the opportunity during the period when unemployment was at its height to carry out, as part of a public works programme, the construction of a chain of aerodromes stretching from coast to coast. The object of this was to facilitate civil aviation, but the existence of this system has a great strategic importance as well.

Canada's estimates in 1937 were \$35,000,000, and this large sum caused considerable heart-searching among the supporters of the Liberal Government, who watched jealously for any signs of preparations for another adventure in Europe. Mr Mackenzie King's explanation that a great Dominion must fulfil the responsibilities for its own defence in a wicked world and not rely on Britain and the United States scarcely satisfied the critics.

Southern Ireland's place in imperial defence is a curious one. Her army alone, among those of the Dominions, is not patterned on the British. Officers are trained at the United States Staff College and its equipment is Germanic. The Free State, however, forms a most important link in the defence system, for under the 1921 Treaty three southern ports, Cork Harbour, Berehaven, and Lough Swilly, are still occupied by British forces. It is conceivable that in another war these might take the place of Channel harbours, if the latter were rendered untenable by enemy bombing. Mr de Valera has promised that Ireland, if the ports are surrendered, will see that they are never used against England, but it is unlikely that Great Britain will evacuate such important points.

In all the Dominions, therefore, with the exception of the Irish Free State, the organisation and equipment of

the various branches of the King's forces have followed the principle laid down by the 1923 Imperial Conference, and have been carried out on lines similar to those of Great Britain, so that their integration in the case of another war would proceed with speed and ease. South Africa has bought British fighting planes, and N.C.O.s from the Regular Army have been sent to assist in the training of the Union's Defence Force; the New Zealand Air Force has been organised by a senior R.A.F. officer; there is a continuous exchange of officers between Canadian and British regiments: an increased number of Dominion pilots come over to Great Britain to take short-service commissions with the R.A.F. Besides these, the visit of Sir Maurice Hankey to Australia and New Zealand in 1935, of Mr Pirow to London in 1936, and the frequent attendance of Dominion liaison officers at the meetings of the Committee of Imperial Defence, are part of the informal system by which the defences of the Commonwealth are being developed as a harmonious whole.

As far as possible the other principles have likewise been carried out. Each member of the Commonwealth has taken measures to ensure its own local protection: the Navy is being strengthened to fulfil its responsibilities as the first line of imperial defence: the air protection of London has been improved, Singapore is nearly completed, and the British-Italian Accord of January 2nd 1937, providing for the maintenance of stability in the Mediterranean, is at least a temporary guarantee of peace in that region.

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To-day, the bookstalls are heavy with volumes devoted to graphic and blood-curdling descriptions of the shape

of the war to come. Whether these are inspired prophecies or tales to frighten children, neither the authors nor the public know. It may be that in future the laurel wreath of victory will adorn the brow of some pale chemist amid his test-tubes, or perhaps it will once again decorate the unscientific but utilitarian bayonet. It may be that our young men will go in their thousands to some foreign field, as they did in 1914.

But here again the aeroplane has revolutionised the war problems of the Commonwealth. The transport of great numbers of troops across the open sea will be far more dangerous than it has ever been before, especially along the great sea distances which are likely to separate the Dominions from the theatre of war. The Imperial Commonwealth may, therefore, not be called on to provide a huge national army, but its contribution will be limited to the use of the Navy, the provision of war material and the furnishing of an air expeditionary force. Such is the help which we are best fitted to give and which would be in accordance with our traditional policy since Edward III fought his Flemish wars. What is even more important, if the Dominions knew that they were not to be called upon once again to sacrifice another generation of their young men in a cause which appears to the majority of Dominion citizens infinitely remote, and were merely to be asked to contribute war material, and, instead of an army corps, a squadron of aeroplanes, the danger of disruption, as the result of Great Britain becoming engaged in a purely European conflict, would be substantially less.

Public interest throughout the Commonwealth has, since the beginning of 1936, shifted from foreign policy to defence. The era of power politics is not yet gone,

Europe again occupies the centre of the stage, and the confusion of pre-War European rivalries is confounded by the new cleavage of post-War ideals. The slow, unnatural massacre in Spain is an example of the clash of forces which may shear up along the whole length of Europe. A bombed battleship, an aeroplane mistakenly brought down, some burning insult, may bring the two creeds to grips. It is consciously against the day when this shall happen that the nations of the Imperial Commonwealth have armed—in the hope that, by doing so, that day may never come.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE DOMINIONS IN THE WORLD

**I**F the ideas of the British Empire helped to fashion the machinery of the League of Nations, the League played no small part in the formation of the diplomatic institutions of the Imperial Commonwealth. Like that most remarkable family of Swiss extraction on their tropic island, the Dominions found themselves in 1919 in a strange new world of international politics, peculiarly ill-equipped for the responsibilities which were entailed.

Though all of them became members of the League in 1920 under Article One of the Covenant [except the Irish Free State, which became a member in September 1923] and were sovereign states at international law, they were without any of the experience or machinery which the older countries had been developing for centuries. The system of diplomatic presentation was founded by the Venetians, when the great Republic held in its fingers the threads of the commercial life of half Europe. The modern science of diplomacy itself began in the years immediately after the Napoleonic Wars, and probably no other branch of political activity has ever acquired the refinements of technique which it has gained in the hands of a multitude of brilliant and talented men of every nationality since that time. It says much for the Dominions that, in spite of their late arrival before the footlights of world affairs, they have been able to build up their own diplomatic corps, take the responsibility for making their



own treaties with foreign powers, play a valuable part at the numerous great conferences which have crowded the post-War era, had no small hand in moulding the history of the League—and all this in less than twenty years.

With the last named, three of the Dominions—South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand—as holders of mandates, have been in particularly close relationship. Besides this, Canada (1928–30), the Irish Free State (1931–3), and Australia (1934–6) have all held non-permanent seats on the Council, while Mr de Valera and Mr Bruce have been presidents of that body. Mr de Water, representing South Africa, and Mr Dandurand of Canada, have been presidents of the Assembly; Mr Sean Lester, Irish Free State, is now Deputy Secretary-General of the League, after having experienced a particularly difficult period of office as High Commissioner for Danzig.

In 1929, moreover, Great Britain and the Dominions signed the Optional Clause of the Statute of the Permanent Court of International Justice. Great Britain made a reservation to the effect that if a dispute should arise with any other member of the Commonwealth, the question should be settled in a manner agreed to by the parties. All the other Dominions made a similar reservation, with the exception of the Free State, which signed it on the sole condition of reciprocity.

As has so often been the case on other occasions, the various British and Dominion delegations at Geneva have found it convenient to consult unofficially together when matters affecting the whole of the Empire have come up for consideration. Although in several instances the points of view displayed by the members of the Commonwealth have been opposed to each other, these differences of opinion have had no serious effects. Presumably on

matters of first-class importance, some form of compromise would be reached by the British representatives, which would enable them to present a united front to the Assembly.

### *Diplomatic Representation*

A diplomat once defined an ambassador as an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country. Whatever may be the truth of this description, envoys have been essential to the conduct of international relations since the Middle Ages.

As early as 1892 the Canadian Government had expressed the wish to be directly represented in Washington by a 'gentleman of marked ability'. For thirty years, however, the matter remained a pious ambition and, until after the War, the relations between foreign countries and the Dominions continued to be carried on by the British Diplomatic Service. When the matter came up again in 1920, Mr Bonar Law suggested a scheme whereby a Canadian minister should be attached to the British Embassy in Washington as a member of the staff and, in the absence of the Ambassador, should take charge of the Embassy. Though both the U.S. State Department and the Canadian Government agreed to this, nothing was done, and it was left to the Irish Free State, intent on taking the fullest advantages of its new privileges, to appoint Professor Smiddy as her minister in Washington in 1924. Two years afterwards Mr Massey was chosen to be Canada's first representative in the United States, and since that time all the other Dominions except New Zealand have followed this example.

To-day Canada has ministers accredited to Washington, Paris, and Tokio; South Africa has ministers in

Washington, Paris, Berlin, The Hague, Rome, Brussels, Stockholm, and Lisbon; Irish Free State, besides Washington, has its diplomatic representatives in Vatican City, Berlin, Paris, Brussels, and, until the civil war, in Madrid.

The Commonwealth of Australia has had a number of Trade Commissioners in various capitals for some years, but until, by the appointment of Mr Keith Officer as Australian Councillor to the British Embassy in Washington in February 1937, it has not been separately represented in any foreign country. As it is, Australia has followed Mr Bonar Law's scheme. Instead of setting up a separate legation, her representative will work as a member of the British Embassy, though no doubt it will not be long before she follows fully the example of the other Dominions. At the moment, therefore, New Zealand alone remains unrepresented abroad.

A diplomatic service is an expensive luxury, especially as, in the words of General Smuts, "Nothing could be worse than to send men to foreign capitals to live in a small and mean way." It is therefore impossible for any of the Dominions to appoint representatives in every foreign country. In a great many cases, therefore, the ambassadors and ministers of Great Britain continue to watch over the affairs of the different Dominions. Thus, the relations of the whole Commonwealth and the U.S.S.R. are carried on by the British Ambassador in Moscow, while in Berlin, since South Africa and the Irish Free State have their own representatives, he has only to look after the affairs of Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The same situation exists in the case of the Consular Service. Thus a South African in trouble in Hamburg would appeal to the Union Consul; but the

same person in a similar predicament in Munich would go to the British Consul for assistance.

It was established by the 1930 Imperial Conference that a Dominion government wishing to communicate urgently with a British Ambassador might do so without first informing the Imperial Government, and the representative would act in accordance with the instructions given him by the Dominion concerned.

It might seem at first sight that this duplication of imperial representatives was in many cases unnecessary. But apart from the fact that diplomatic representation is a sign of sovereign status, many foreign countries have sent their diplomatists to the Dominions, and these form a welcome addition to the cultural and social life of their capital cities. In Dublin, for instance, the various ministers combine with the celebrated literary clique, the judges and advocates of the Supreme Court, the professors of the two universities, and the Oireachtas, to form a small but brilliant circle of which any capital might be proud. As a result these cities escape the provincialism which is so often the drawback of those capitals through which the current of world activity runs but slowly. This alone makes a diplomatic corps valuable to a Dominion.

### *The Negotiation and Signature of Treaties*

In June 1895 the Marquis of Ripon, as Colonial Secretary, issued a dispatch laying down the rules by which treaties between foreign powers and the Dominions might be made.

"A foreign power", it stated, "can only be approached through Her Majesty's Representative, and any agreement entered into with it affecting any part of Her Majesty's dominions is an agreement between Her

Majesty and the Sovereign of the foreign state, and it is to Her Majesty's Government that the foreign state would apply in case of any question arising under it." Any other procedure, the dispatch goes on to say, would give the colonies an international status and would be equivalent to breaking up the Empire into a number of independent states. Therefore any treaty made between a colony and a foreign power would be negotiated by Her Majesty's representative at the court of the foreign power, assisted by some special delegate appointed by the colonial government.

The object of this procedure was to maintain the diplomatic unity of the Empire, and treaties continued to be made in this way until after the Great War. The only development which took place between 1895 and 1923 was in the case of the Franco-Canadian Commercial Treaty of 1907. On that occasion the negotiations were carried on by two Dominion representatives acting alone. When, however, the time came for signing the agreement, the British *Chargé d'Affaires* added his signature to that of the Canadians.

After the War it became necessary to make a new commercial treaty and a similar method was used; the British Ambassador signing the document as a party to the agreement. The Canadian Government defended this form of procedure in the Parliament at Ottawa against the criticism levelled against it on the grounds that it did not accord with the new status of Canada as a member of the League of Nations.

In 1923 a new method was introduced. The Halibut Treaty between Canada and the United States was negotiated and signed by Mr Lapointe alone in the name of the King. The claim of the British Government to

take part in this was withdrawn after it had been made clear that the treaty only concerned Canada. Incidentally, the United States Government was under the impression that the treaty bound the whole Empire, and it was some time before it discovered its mistake.

As a result of the confusion caused by Canada's action, the whole subject was reviewed by the Imperial Conference which met a few months later in the fall of 1923. The procedure which was drawn up then, and which has been added to and expanded by subsequent conferences in the light of practical experience, is now fairly clearly defined. Agreements with foreign countries may take one of two forms. Either they may be treaties made between heads of states, such as the recent London Naval Agreement, 1936, or they may be administrative agreements between governments, such as that made between Canada and the U.S.A. in 1923, with a view to preventing rum-running during the prohibition period.

Any British government may enter into either of these types of compact without reference to any other government provided that the treaty in question does not affect the latter's interests. In all cases, however, it is now the custom for any of His Majesty's governments to inform the others before any negotiations with a foreign country are begun. The other governments thus have an opportunity of collaborating in the making of the treaty and safeguarding any of their interests which were endangered by it. The 1926 Conference went out of its way to emphasise the fact that when one member-nation has been informed by another that it intends to begin conversations with a foreign power, the Dominion so notified must state, with the least possible delay, whether it thinks that it will be affected by the agreement and whether it wishes to take

part in the negotiations. If no comments are forthcoming after a reasonable interval, discussions may proceed on the assumption that the other governments will ratify the treaty when it is completed. The object of this is to prevent a Dominion going through the tedious work of making an international agreement, only to find it repudiated by other governments on the grounds that they have had no part in negotiating it.

The last rule which concerns the treaty-making powers of the Dominions is the fairly obvious one: that no government may take any steps which will involve any other government in *active* obligations without its assent. Thus, in the case of the Lausanne Treaty, 1923, the British Government, which was alone represented, entered into certain commitments concerning the Dardanelles in the name of the whole Empire. Canada refused to ratify the treaty on the grounds that she had not taken part in the negotiations, though she admitted that the treaty bound her. Mr Mackenzie King, however, made it clear that though this might be the position at law, he did not consider that Canada was bound morally to implement her obligations under the treaty, and that the question whether she intended to take any active steps to this end, was for her Parliament alone to decide.

It is doubtful whether to-day a treaty signed by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom alone, would bind any Dominion, even legally, unless the latter had been present at the conferences, in which case it would almost certainly have signed the treaty for itself.

#### *Representation at International Conferences*

We saw how at Versailles, 1919, the Dominions obtained dual representation. At the 1921 Washington Conference,

however, so far from their being present in two capacities, the United States Government did not even invite the Dominions to send any representatives at all. The difficulty was overcome by sending a composite delegation drawn from the different Dominions on the advice of their several governments. Again, at Lausanne, pressure brought to bear by the French Government on the British, led the latter to exclude the Dominions from participation, with the result that Canada took up the attitude described above. At the Conference from which the outcome was the Locarno Settlement, the United Kingdom was again represented alone. The obligations which she undertook as a guarantor of the Franco-German frontier, were undertaken on her own responsibility and the Dominions specifically excluded from any participation in them. It is worth noting, however, that after the Foreign Secretary had explained to the 1926 Conference the nature of the Locarno Agreement a motion congratulating the British Government was passed unanimously.

The system was stabilised by a resolution of the 1926 Imperial Conference which laid down these three possible methods of representation: either by a single plenipotentiary acting for the whole Commonwealth, as at the Treaty of Lausanne; or by a single delegation drawn from the different Dominions, as in the case of the Washington Treaty; or by separate delegations, as in the case of The Hague Conferences of 1929 and 1930.

Of recent years this third method has been generally used, and is likely to become the rule for the future.

It will be seen that just as custom and necessity have begun to develop an informal Constitution within the



Commonwealth itself, from the same agencies has sprung a code of practice for dealing with its external relations. If within the Commonwealth the tendency seems to run towards centralisation, in foreign affairs the trend appears to be in the opposite direction. At present this is inevitable. It may be, however, that as the need for a solid foreign policy for the whole Commonwealth becomes greater and the machinery for consultation becomes more efficient, this tendency will change and the international machinery of each of the members, while retaining its peculiar characteristics, will work with the others as a coherent whole.

## CHAPTER XII

### A KING OF KINGDOMS

**T**HE days of expectancy passed swiftly. The crowded streets became fuller and the decorations dustier. Each morning brought news of some fresh arrival—a contingent of Dominion troops, the Sultan of a Malayan State, an Arab prince, a statesman belonging to one of his imperial governments overseas, the representative of a tiny Pacific island descended from a mutineer in his navy. London, during those days and nights, was clearly the capital of no mean Empire.

On the evening before, the crowds drifted through the streets along the route, watched their hardier fellow-citizens prepare to spend the night upon the kerb, went to the palace to cheer, as many of them had done on an anxious August evening nearly a quarter of a century before. Then in the grey misty morning they waited in their millions for him to go to his crowning. Light-heartedly, to speed the slow minutes, they cheered an incidental dustman and a sober, plumed policeman, and watched the steady lines of troops marching to their positions. It was not only to see a splendid sight that they had come, but also to be present at an imperial rite, to see the person who was to be consecrated before God and the nations as the representative and ruler of the Imperial Commonwealth.

The hours passed; the foreign guests, the Dominion representatives, had gone to the Abbey; the white-haired

Queen-Mother and the Princess, the heir to the Empire, had followed them; and then down Whitehall, past the palace window through which another King had stepped to his execution, and the memorial to the men who had lost their lives that the Imperial Commonwealth might live, came the King to his crowning. They cheered him, his citizens, without exuberance but with reverence and sympathy for his great hour. They had forgotten so easily, too easily, that it might have been another; but he himself perhaps did not forget.

Chance or Fate or the Will of God had brought him to wear the Crown of the Kingdoms of the Commonwealth. He was the priest-king and constitutional monarch, deity and rubber stamp, about to receive the symbol of the ties that fastened a quarter of the world in fellowship. It was not, as so many said, the only tie—that at least was nonsense; but it stood as the visible sign of the bonds of blood, culture, history, common experience, and dignity on which the unity of the Commonwealth rests. Its wearer held the greatest office on earth. His service, or servitude, lasted as long as life. His was the mystery, the power and, perhaps, the glory. . . .

Vivat, vivat Rex Georgius.

The King passed along the aisle of the ancient church of the Kings of England, but the oath he took was not to the people of England alone, as his predecessor had done, but to the peoples of six Kingdoms and of his Empire of India.

“Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the peoples of *Great Britain, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand*, and the Union of *South Africa*, of your Possessions

and the other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, and of your Empire of *India*, according to their respective laws and customs?"

"I solemnly promise so to do."

. . . . .

"Let my prayer come up into thy presence as the incense: and let the lifting of my hands be as an evening sacrifice."

The sweetly worded service followed its immemorial lines. They anointed him as Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet had anointed Solomon; he received the Orb set under the Cross which the Holy Mother Church had given to the Emperors to remind them that "the whole world is subject to the Power and Empire of Christ our Redeemer", and the Ring, just as the Charlemagne had received it from Leo III. They lifted him on to his throne as the fierce German warriors had raised their chieftain upon a shield, and they crowned him with St Edward's Crown which had been made for Charles II in the year of the Glorious Restoration. Then, as the bells rang out across London and from London out over the world, the unseen millions beyond the Abbey walls were caught for a moment of time in the solemnity of the ancient ceremony.

At the end, preceded by his prime ministers and escorted by his soldiers from all his wide Dominions, the King went from his crowning.

That evening, speaking to his people for the first time over the radio, he said:

"Never has the ceremony itself had so wide a significance, for the Dominions are now free and equal

partners with this ancient Kingdom, and I felt this morning that the whole Empire was in very truth gathered within the walls of Westminster Abbey."

That same day General Smuts had told a large audience, gathered in Capetown to celebrate the Coronation, that:

"South Africa is for the first time taking an active part in the Crowning of the King. In a deeper sense than ever the King and Queen now become ours. . . . The King who is being crowned to-day is not the head of the central kingdom to which many other Dominions and possessions belong, but to a group of equal States of whose free association together he is the common symbol. His Kingdom has thus a meaning which no previous kingdom has ever had, and his crowning for the first time as sovereign of such a constellation of free States is a unique event in history. Here for the first time we have a King of kingdoms spread over the whole globe. . . . When, to-day, we crown our common King, we at the same time pledge ourselves to maintain intact and inviolate this inner spiritual free soul of our group."

The controversy gathers and the mystery becomes deeper. The crown is single, is sixfold. King George is King of Great Britain, is Sovereign Lord in and over the Union of South Africa and King of Australia, New Zealand, and of the Republic of Southern Ireland, is *le roi Canadien*, is "our lawful and Liege Lord George the Sixth by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland, and the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King. . . ." Who knows?

The term 'Kingdom' is more fitting than the colourless

word 'Dominion'. 'Kingdom of Canada' had been used in the constitution document presented by Sir John Macdonald to the Imperial Government at the time of the confederation. His object was to emphasise the relationship to the Crown with the colonies overseas. The Foreign Office timidly and for fear of offending the republican susceptibilities of the Americans substituted 'Dominion of Canada' for Macdonald's term—and so it was. Yet at King George's crowning, the American Press spoke of the preciousness of this symbol of their common heritage with the people of the Imperial Commonwealth. "In the Abbey Church of St Peter at Westminster", said a New York paper, "to-day the dearest institutions of liberty, the richest heritage of freemen are again enthroned, and all men who value their hard-won liberty may unite in saying, 'God save the King!'"

George Washington had called monarchy a cursed institution.

Ireland, too, in Victoria's time, had claimed to be a kingdom, and South Africa, since the War, had been insistent upon its right to the title. Let them be kingdoms then: the theory of neutrality may suffer, but the unity of the Commonwealth will be unchanged and possibly strengthened. As we have already said, the question of the participation of the Dominions in another war will not be governed by political or legal definitions, but by the nature of the circumstances themselves.

. . . . .

The crowning of King George was, traditionally, the occasion of the holding of an Imperial Conference. It met two days after the Coronation, in Queen Anne's room in St James's Palace. It was the first one since the

Statute of Westminster had passed the Imperial Parliament. An old stager like Mr Mackenzie King, who had been at the 1923 and 1926 Conferences, noted the differences: "... Continuity through change; progress through development of proved courses and innate tendencies," he said, with Edmund Burke. "We are partners in a great enterprise, jointly responsible for a new experiment, the success or failure of which must profoundly influence the future of mankind," Mr Baldwin reminded them. "We of the Dominions must recognise that the new status which we have achieved and which we regard with such pride, carries with it not only great privileges, but also great responsibilities," warned Mr Lyons. "I fully realise that the Dominion which I have the honour to represent is both small and distant, and that we can hope to play only a modest part in the deliberations of this Conference, or, indeed, in the affairs of the world," said Mr Savage of New Zealand, with delightful diffidence.

Punctuated by reviews, banquets, and the Derby, the Conference was finished just in time to allow the delegates to enjoy the sunny glories of Ascot, though this was probably a coincidence.<sup>1</sup> The actual deliberations were kept strictly guarded secrets; only the conclusions of the Conference were published, together with the set speeches made at the opening and at the end. The subjects to which most attention was given were Foreign Affairs and Defence. While discussion of the former was still proceeding, the Dominion premiers were enabled to sense at first hand the latent tension which exists in Europe on the occasion of the bombing of the German *Deutschland* and the shelling of the Spanish town of Almeria in

<sup>1</sup> This would be in accordance with British parliamentary tradition, for the House of Commons at one time used to adjourn on Derby Day to allow hon. members to back their fancies.

retaliation. They realised, perhaps for the first time, the thinness of the crust which covered the Continental volcano and the heat that the centuries had generated under it.

Their conclusions were unoriginal but reassuring. They were determined to pursue peace and to maintain the ideals of the League of Nations. They expressed the view that its membership might be increased by the separation of the Covenant from the Peace Treaties, approved of the principle of regional pacts, and declared that, in order to increase their influence for peace, they intended to continue "to consult and co-operate with one another in this vital interest and in all matters of common concern". Finally, they condemned the idea that the world would be eventually divided into two camps—the Right and the Left.

Perhaps the most striking contribution to the discussion of foreign affairs came from Mr Lyons, who proposed that a pact should be negotiated between the various powers grouped round the Pacific Ocean. His plan met with general support at the Conference, though the attitude of the Japanese made its success extremely problematical.

The conclusions on imperial defence were rather reports of progress than statements of principle. All the Dominions had increased their defence budgets; Singapore was almost completed; the air defence of Great Britain was considered adequate. Imperial forces in every part of the Commonwealth were being trained and organised on uniform lines. It was generally agreed that the various governments should exchange information regarding their defences, and should continue with plans already undertaken for the protection of ports, bases, and



intra-imperial lines of communication. A sub-committee was established under Sir Thomas Inskip, Minister of Defence, to consider the problem of co-ordinating the supply and production of war materials and foodstuffs in case a crisis should arise, and it was arranged that collaboration in this particular sphere should be continued between governments after the Conference had dispersed.

The constitutional question, brought up by South Africa, concerning Dominion nationality was satisfactorily disposed of by leaving the situation much as it was before. As far as economic questions went, it was considered that alterations in the Ottawa Agreements could be best made by negotiations between members. The Conference emphasised the need for the stimulation of international trade throughout the world.

On the face of it, the conclusions were neither startling nor particularly new. Peace—the ideals of the League—uniformity and co-operation in defence were all fifteen years old at least. Yet Mr Lyons, in his concluding remarks, said, with a ring of sincerity, "Reviewing the Conference in retrospect, I say, without hesitation, that we have emerged triumphantly."

There was an atmosphere of cordiality and friendliness that had not been always present on earlier occasions. The constitutional questions, which had often caused bitter argument before being finally resolved, were now laid to rest. Each of the premiers went out of his way to say that he had been able to get a clearer idea of the personalities and problems of his colleagues. "The outstanding feature of the deliberations has been the good nature, tolerance, and understanding shown by all the delegations towards each other's difficulties."

These simple elements of humour and sympathy are

essential to the success of any international gathering, and because they were present, the Conference was a success.

There was only one regrettable feature, and that was the absence of the representatives of the Irish Free State. The Government's reasons for this were explained in the Dail by Mr de Valera. Their envoys had been snubbed and humiliated at Ottawa. The quarrel with Great Britain could scarcely be discussed in front of the premiers of the other Dominions, for it was a private matter between the two countries. Anyhow, he argued, Ireland had no intention of settling the dispute by compromise, for such an action would be an admission of unconditional surrender. It was a preposterous, cynical argument and scarcely comprehensible had it not been obvious that Mr de Valera was thinking more of the impending election than of the welfare of Ireland. The 'grave losses' which he calculated would be sustained from attendance at the Conference were not of privileges to the Free State, but of votes to the Fianna Fail Party. Perhaps if there had been no election, his attitude would have been different.

. . . . .

Possibly the greatest difference between this Conference and the earlier ones was the sense of duty towards the world which infused the speeches of the prime ministers. They seemed conscious that their own houses were now in order. The problems of construction and change, which had taken up their time on previous occasions, were solved: there was no obvious need for any alterations in the Imperial Constitution for many years to come. Instead, their thoughts were centred on the problems of the nations, and on the way in which the future of the

Commonwealth could be directed, so as to promote the happiness, not only of its own citizens, but of the whole world.

They were conscious of the demand for leadership and their ability to provide it, and they parted in the determination that their energies in the future would be directed towards its provision.

In this they reflected the character of modern imperialism. The Roman tones of Curzon and Kipling's buoyant verse ring strangely, sometimes gratingly, in our ears. They represented nobly the attitude and spirit of their times, but events have swept us towards new horizons. Not only are we pledged to the duty of the just administration of our colonies overseas—trustees for them "in the interest of the world and humanity" (General Hertzog), *but we are responsible for our possessions and privileges to the world.* Our mission remains, as the Dominion premiers were so acutely aware, but it is not to force our ideas of government and justice upon mankind, but to lead it towards the high goal of peace and appeasement. We consider ourselves, not better men, but men with better opportunities, with stable political institutions, great economic resources and matured traditions, and all the advantages which these provide.

Such is the character of British imperialism in the post-War world, and it was in tune with its new spirit that the 1937 Conference discussed the great problems placed before it, came to their conclusions and departed.

## CHAPTER XIII

### CANADA

"My aim was to elevate the Province of Lower Canada to a thoroughly British character, to link its people to the sovereignty of Britain, by making them all participators in those high privileges, conducive at once to freedom and order, which have long been the glory of Englishmen. I hoped to confer on a united people a more extensive enjoyment of free and responsible government, and to merge the petty jealousies of a small community, and the odious animosities of origin, in the higher feelings of a nobler and more comprehensive nationality."

LORD DURHAM'S PROCLAMATION

*Issued October 9th 1838*

THE foundations of the British Commonwealth were laid in Canada. It was there that under Elgin the first experiments in self-government were made. The British North American Provinces were the first group of colonies to attempt confederation. It was on the initiative of a Canadian premier that the 1926 Conference essayed a definition of the post-War status of the Dominions. Perhaps in the serener atmosphere of the New World such experiments seem less dangerous than elsewhere. Her size and the longer span of history have always given greater weight to her influence at the council-table of the Commonwealth.

By the Treaty of Paris, 1763, the British Crown assumed sovereignty over the old French dominions of East and West Florida, Grenada and Quebec, and with it the

responsibility for the welfare and good government of a widely scattered population, stretching south to the Caribbean and north to the snows. It was believed that the whole of the North American hemisphere from that time onwards would develop as a single unity, but this was prevented by the revolt of the Thirteen Colonies fifteen years later, and contrary to logic, geography, and economic forces, Canada and the United States went their separate ways.

After the Revolutionary War, Canada remained the largest possession of the Crown. Her population, which hitherto had been composed of a vast majority of French and a handful of British traders and army veterans, was increased by the immigration of the United Empire Loyalists driven from the homes in the South by vindictive persecution carried out under the banner of liberty. The loyalty of the French population during these years of trial was due partly to the sympathetic treatment which they received at the hands of the early Governors, such as Murray and Carleton, and partly to the dislike which all good catholics felt for the bigoted austerity of puritan New England, which gave them little prospect of such tolerant treatment from Congress as they had experienced as subjects of King George.

From this recognition of French-Canadian nationality, both in the Treaty of Paris and the Constitution Act of 1791, have sprung two of the three problems which have governed the whole of the development of the Canadian nation until to-day. The first is racial, and arises from the struggle of the French to maintain their national individuality. The second is political, and has taken the form of a conflict between localism and centralisation. This, again, is primarily the struggle of French Quebec to

maintain itself against Anglo-Saxon predominance in the other provinces.

The third problem is as old and as important as the others, but arises from a different source—from the continual pressure of American influence on Canadian life. The 'southern drag' exists along the whole three thousand miles of artificial frontier which separates the two countries. Lines of communication, the natural divisions of the continent, economic inter-relationship run north and south: Montreal is much nearer New York than Vancouver, and Saskatchewan is merely an extension of the State of Montana. "That there should be a country called Canada distinct from the United States", says M. Siegfried, "is a mere accident of history"—how long it will remain distinct is a question of practical politics.

. . . . .

From the Constitution Act, 1791, to the governorship of the Earl of Elgin, 1846-54, the Constitutions of the Canadian provinces consisted of the usual three features: the Governor appointed by and responsible to the ministry at home; his council chosen from any group of men with whom he happened to agree; and a Parliament of two Houses, whose legislation the Governor might veto or reserve, and which had little control over the policy pursued by him and his council.

The Constitution Act, among other things, divided the country into two provinces known as Upper and Lower Canada, the former corresponding to modern Ontario and the latter to Quebec. The effect of this action was to enable the French to develop untroubled by the fear of being submerged by the growing Anglo-Saxon population. Although the Act attempted to model the

government of Canada on that of the Mother Country, the lack of responsibility owed by the executive to the elected representatives of the colonists led immediately to abuses. Control in the case of both provinces passed into the hands of small groups of wealthy and influential individuals, called 'Family Compact' in Ontario, and the 'Château Clique' in Quebec. The undemocratic character of this régime, which reproduced all the features which had led to the American Revolution, resulted, in spite of the attempts at conciliation on the part of a series of governors, in rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada under Mackenzie and Papineau in 1837, both of which had the object of obtaining responsible government.

The rebellions were put down without much difficulty, but the event caused uneasiness at home. It was to inquire into the reasons for this uprising, and probably also to get rid of a notorious thorn in their ministerial flesh, that the Melbourne Government sent Lord Durham out as High Commissioner for Canada. Lord Durham was only five months in the country before he resigned, as a result of disagreement with the Imperial Government concerning the punishment of certain rebels. In that short time he won the confidence of all sections of the population, and obtained a sufficient insight into the colonists' grievances to compile a *Report on Affairs in British North America* which offered the only hope of ending the unhappy sight of "two nations warring in the bosom of a single State". When the dying Durham passed through the streets of Montreal on his way home, it is recorded that they were filled with a great crowd of people whose silence marked the general grief at his departure. He was not the first, nor by any means the last, servant

of the Imperial Government to be betrayed by personal spite and weakness at home.

Though he returned to London apparently a failure, his report was the first step towards the partnership of the Commonwealth, for it recognised the essential principle of equality of political rights between the citizens of Great Britain and those of the British communities beyond the seas. Eight years later Lord Elgin, Durham's son-in-law, was able to write that he had "adopted frankly and unequivocally Lord Durham's view of government".

Shortly after Lord Elgin's arrival in the colony, the French-Liberal Party were returned to power at a general election, with a huge majority. Elgin immediately called on Louis Lafontaine, its leader, to form a cabinet. During the session which followed, a bill was introduced which had the effect of indemnifying certain rebels with public funds. The bill met with bitter opposition, but Elgin refused to interfere, and in spite of rioting and agitation gave it his assent. From that time onwards responsible government was assured, not only in Canada, but in every Dominion in the Commonwealth.

There was, however, one question upon which Lord Durham proved to be quite wrong. He considered that in time French-Canadian individuality would be extinguished for ever. With this object, Lower and Upper Canada were joined by the Union Act in 1840, and by this the latter received larger representation in the House of Assembly. The partnership between the two provinces proved to be a very uneasy one. The French and British factions were almost equal and in constant opposition, and after the introduction of responsible government, the situation became a complete farce. Between 1854 and



1864 there were ten ministries, the shortest of which lasted four days.

In 1844 there entered the Canadian Parliament one of the greatest colonial statesmen of all time. J. A. Macdonald was a Glasgow-born barrister who, for nearly forty years, dominated the whole of Canada, and to whose efforts it was principally due that she developed as a single great Dominion. In a way he resembled Rhodes, for just as the latter had foreseen a future South African nation living under the British flag, Macdonald believed that the people of Canada could only develop as "British Americans under the sway of the British Sovereign". His methods, too, resembled those of Rhodes in their vitality and recklessness. There were occasions on which he appeared little more than a petty politician, but on others he rose to the supreme heights of statesmanship.

Macdonald was the driving force behind the Federation of 1867. For many years past the idea had been present in Canadian politics. The necessity for greater unity had been shown during the early days of the American Civil War, when there was an acute danger of a conflict arising between the two countries, and again the weakness of the bargaining power of the provinces was emphasised after Lord Elgin's trade treaty, made in 1854 with the United States, had lapsed. The first real movement in this direction, if we exclude the union of the two Canadas in 1840, began in the maritime provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. At a conference summoned by the three governments, Macdonald and seven others appeared on behalf of Canada, and put forward a scheme for the federation of the whole of British North America. "The Canadians descended upon us," wrote one of the other delegates, "and before they

were three days among us, we forgot our own scheme and thought only about theirs."

The flame of enthusiasm for federation swept across the greater part of the country. In 1866 Macdonald and others went to London to consult the Colonial Office. Though the majority of English statesmen were entirely indifferent to the scheme, Lord Carnarvon, full of the zeal of a newcomer to office, caught some of their spirit and gave the project his support. In 1867 the British North America Act was passed by the Imperial Parliament, and Canada turned to deal with the problems which her new status produced.

The victory had been by no means an easy one. In the maritime provinces, opposition to the idea of a larger federation was violent and prolonged. Joseph Howe in Nova Scotia fought it with all the weapons of his genius, and was only reconciled to it after it had been accomplished. Prince Edward Island, indeed, for the first six years continued to remain separate.

By the statute, a Dominion or federal legislature was set up consisting of two chambers, the Senate and House of Commons. The former has ninety-six members nominated for life by the Governor-General on the advice of the Dominion Government. Each senator must be over thirty years of age, a British subject, and the owner of property not less than \$4,000 in value. The number of senators representing each province ranges from twenty-four in the cases of Ontario and Quebec to four in the case of Prince Edward Island.

The House of Commons is elected by adult suffrage, and the numbers returned for each province depend upon the size of its population. Quebec never has less than sixty-five members, and at present the biggest province is

Ontario with eighty-two. Suffrage is withheld in British Columbia from Japanese, Chinese, and Indians, and in certain other provinces Chinese and North American Indians may not vote.

Unlike the United States and Australia, the central government in Canada has all the residuary powers, while the provinces may only exercise those allotted to them by the British North America Act. The reason for this was that the statesmen who drew up the Constitution were greatly impressed by the weakness of the Federal Government in the United States during the Civil War. The subjects over which the Dominion Government exercises control consist of defence, taxation, communications, supervision of agriculture, regulation of trade and commerce, and the right to enforce treaty obligations.

The militant localism of many of the provinces, to which reference has been made, was soothed by the maintenance of separate provincial governments. These consist of a Lieutenant-Governor appointed by the Dominion and a single chamber, though Quebec has also a nominated Legislative Council of twenty-four members.

The provinces were, by the British North America Act, given powers over matters of local and municipal importance—public works and institutions, administration of civil and criminal law, property and education—and they have control over immigration and agriculture subordinate to that of the Federal Government.

The Constitution can only be altered by an Act of the Imperial Parliament, and the difficulty of obtaining unity of opinion among the provinces had made any such amendment hard to procure.

The period between 1867 and 1914, during nearly the

whole first twenty years of which Sir J. A. Macdonald was Prime Minister, saw half a century of rapid expansion. By 1873 the four original provinces had been increased to seven by the entry of Manitoba (1870), British Columbia (1871), and Prince Edward Island (1873) into the Confederation. Manitoba had previously belonged to the Hudson's Bay Company, and the somewhat precipitous way in which the Dominion set about reorganising the new province, which appeared to threaten their land tenure, caused a number of half-caste farmers to rise in rebellion under Louis Riel. The rising was suppressed, and Manitoba began to make immediate progress—in the next decade her population increased from 12,000 to 66,000.

One of the conditions on which British Columbia had agreed to enter the Federation was that a railway should be built linking the Pacific coast with the East. The successful completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1885 brought fulfilment to a dream which statesmen, both in Canada and in Great Britain, had entertained for many years. They feared that the United States might drive a wedge northwards into the still scarcely populated prairie lands of the Middle West, and thus intercept the route to the Pacific. The C.P.R. linked up the two ocean coasts, and by bringing the extreme provinces nearer together, made the working of the federal system considerably less difficult.

As in the case of the United States, the 'frontier' was slowly rolled back under the tide of immigration which swept through the Eastern provinces into the Middle and Far West. A huge increase in population took place after the introduction by Sir Wilfrid Laurier of his immigration policy in 1897, as a result of which, during the next

thirteen years, two million emigrants entered the country. These people came principally from the British Isles and from the United States, but there were also large numbers from Scandinavia and eastern Europe. The assimilation of these elements, unaccustomed and even, as in the case of the Doukhobors, antagonistic to British-Canadian ideas, has been an immense task. Generally speaking the original settler, especially if he comes of conservative peasant stock, clings to the customs of his ancient home. The folk-songs of the Danube valley and the Ukraine, rendered more plaintive by the dull longing of exile, may be heard among the raw villages of the prairie. The second generation, however, drawn into the melting-pot of the educational and social system of the Dominion, soon loses the vestiges of his or her nationality and becomes superficially an ordinary Canadian citizen. It is from this race-mixture that the new nation has sprung.

The economic expansion of Canada was equally astonishing. Wheat production increased between 1871 and 1914 from 16 million bushels to 400 millions, and the growth of other branches of agriculture was in similar proportions. Again, between 1871 and 1911, the output of gold rose from 23,000 ounces to 862,000 ounces, and of iron ore from 130,000 tons to over three millions.

Politically, the history of this period divides almost exactly into two halves. During the first the Conservatives under Macdonald were in power, and during the second, from 1896 to 1911, the Liberals governed under Sir Wilfrid Laurier.

Macdonald's first period of office lasted from the Federation to 1874, when he was defeated as a result of the exposure of certain scandals connected with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company in which he was

involved. During those years he was concerned principally in pushing on the building of the railway, trying to make the Federation work smoothly, and settling certain outstanding disputes between Canada and the United States concerning fishing rights and compensation for damage to Canadian property caused by the Fenian invasion during the Civil War. The Liberal Government which followed under Alexander Mackenzie was not successful. It lacked leadership and unity, and broke up in the face of a slump which coincided with the beginning of its term of office.

In 1878 Macdonald came into power with what he was pleased to call a 'National Policy', consisting of a programme of internal development and the promise of high tariffs. The introduction of the latter may or may not have caused the improvement of the economic situation shortly afterwards. For the next eighteen years the Conservatives remained in office, and during the first thirteen Macdonald, whose reputation as a nation-builder had risen to Bismarckian proportions, was Prime Minister. After his death the party lingered on with dwindling popularity under four successive leaders, the only consolation for whose ineffectiveness was the short time for which they remained in power.

In 1896 the Liberal Party took office under Sir Wilfrid Laurier, who was the first French-Canadian to become Premier of the Dominion. This event was regarded by the so-called imperialists at home as a prelude to the break-up of the Empire. In actual fact, Laurier turned out to be as loyal and genuine a citizen of the Empire as Macdonald had been. Although his party favoured Free Trade, he retained the tariffs set up by his predecessor, lowering them only in favour of Great Britain as Canada's

contribution to the cause of Imperial Preference, an action which Kipling commemorated in the poem, *Our Lady of the Snows* :

A Nation spoke to a Nation,  
A Throne sent word to a Throne:  
"Daughter am I in my mother's house  
But mistress in my own.  
The gates are mine to open,  
As the gates are mine to close,  
And I abide by my Mother's House,"  
Said our Lady of the Snows.

The Free Traders at home, however, saw that the Mother's doors remained firmly closed.

The politics of these years ran smoothly. The Boer War caused an outcry among the French-Canadians against participation, but seven thousand men went from the Dominion and did gallant service. The Alaska Boundary Award caused a temporary estrangement between Canada and the Mother Country. After the Imperial Conference of 1907, attention was drawn to the growing German menace, and a worthless dispute between the two great parties as to how Canada could best help imperial naval defence was the principal question of those years.<sup>1</sup>

In 1911 a swing of the pendulum and the cry of 'no annexation', aroused by the proposal for a reciprocity agreement with the United States, brought the Conservatives, under Robert Borden, back into office after fifteen long years in the political wilderness. Three years later, as in almost every other country in the Commonwealth, the antagonisms of local politics were forgotten in the anxiety of the early days of the Great War.

Within a few months of the declaration of war, a force of 30,000, raised chiefly by the energy of Colonel Hughes,

<sup>1</sup> cf. Chapter III, pp. 31-2.

the Minister of Militia, was on the high seas bound for Europe. In all, Canada contributed nearly half a million men to the imperial forces. On Vimy Ridge, at the second battle of Ypres, where they were the first troops to suffer casualties in a gas attack, at Arras, Mons, and the grim days of slaughter during the advance to Passchendaele, the Canadian troops proved themselves among the finest on the Allied side.

The necessities of the War caused unrest in Quebec. The introduction in 1917 of the Military Service Act, which provided for conscription, resulted in a split among Laurier's Liberals, between the French-Canadian members and those of Anglo-Saxon origin from the West. The latter joined Borden in a coalition which continued to the end of the War. In 1919 the Canadian Premier, with the other imperial representatives at the Peace Conference, set his signature to the Peace Treaty, and Canada turned to begin her life as a sovereign nation.

The end of the War was, as elsewhere, followed speedily by the fall of the ministry which had been in power during the years of crisis. The public wished to be rid of anything which carried the flavour of those unhappy years. In 1921 the Conservatives, now under the leadership of Meighen, after the resignation of Borden, were defeated by the Liberals, led by Mr Mackenzie King, at an election, in which appeared for the first time, and with astonishing success, a new group called the National Progressive Party, representing principally the farming interest in Ontario and the West.

The distinction of opinion between the two great parties in Canadian politics has never been very great. They have relied for their support upon personal and local prejudice,



and upon a Gilbertian element of heredity. Both Liberals and Conservatives have been more polite to the financial interests than social etiquette demanded; both claim to be the watchdogs of the rights of the workers. The Liberal Party, in spite of its name, is essentially conservative. This is due to the large measure of support it receives from ultra-conservative Catholic French opinion. The Conservatives claim a monopoly of orthodoxy and patriotism, which are, in fact, equally divided between the two. The arrival on the scenes of a third party which had a definitely progressive outlook, and which at its first Federal election gained more seats than did the Conservatives, appeared likely to change the whole course of Canadian political history. Although Mr Mackenzie King's Government had to rely upon the support of the Progressives, and this fact gave the latter some control over, and imparted a rural bias to, the policy of that government, the characteristic inability of farmers to work together speedily led to its break-up and eventual disappearance. An efficient, well-oiled party machine is an essential factor in the success of any political movement in the North American continent, and the lack of this, together with the discredit cast on it by the failure of farmers' administrations in the provinces, were handicaps the Progressives found too heavy to sustain.

A General Election in 1925 did little beyond reproduce the balance of parties of the previous Parliament. At the end of a few months the Liberals found themselves in difficulties, and after the exposure of a scandal in the Customs Department in connection with the prevalent liquor racketeering, decided to resign. The Prime Minister advised the Governor-General to dissolve Parliament, but Lord Byng preferred to summon Mr Meighen to take

office, since his party had 116 seats in the House of Commons to the Liberals' 101. The Conservative Government, however, was tactless enough to try to get round constitutional practice by appointing acting-ministers rather than risk losing precious seats in by-elections, and was soon defeated.

The election which followed was heated but a little confused. The Liberals appealed to the country as the guardians of the constitutional liberties of the whole Commonwealth; the Conservatives fell back traditionally upon a tariff programme, and made the most of the dregs of the Customs scandal. They were unsuccessful, and the Liberals, supported by a number of Independents and Progressives, came back into power. Shortly afterwards Mr Mackenzie King left for home to attend the Imperial Conference of 1926.

For nearly three years, political activity in the Dominion was lulled by the enjoyment of the hectic boom years. But in the fall of 1929, the Wall Street crash, which involved the Dominion more closely than almost any other country, seemed suddenly to shift the foundations of Canada's life from under the feet of her citizens. The depression in industry was increased by the enactment in 1930 of the Hawley-Smoot Tariff by the United States Congress, which hit Canadian industrial exports especially hard. The economic situation could scarcely have been worse when Parliament was dissolved in July 1930. The electorate, looking round for scapegoats, not unnaturally chose Mr Mackenzie King and his Government, with the result that the Conservatives were returned with a majority of twenty-seven over all other parties.

Mr Bennett, who had succeeded Mr Meighen as leader of the party in 1927, began his term of office most

confidently. He had started life as a small-town lawyer, and while still a young man had become the leader of the Alberta bar. He was fortunate enough to inherit a large industrial property in Eastern Canada and so became very wealthy. A phenomenally hard worker, better acquainted with the methods of business men than with the subtleties of economic theory, he was an enthusiastic exponent of the virtue of tariffs, especially when directed against the United States, and he also had the reputation of being an ardent imperialist.

His first steps on taking office were to pass legislation to provide £5,000,000 for public works to relieve unemployment, and to heighten the Canadian tariff walls. While at the 1930 Imperial Conference he attempted to get some measure of preference for Canadian wheat in the British market in return for concessions in the Dominion. This would have meant a tax on foodstuffs, which the Labour Government in the United Kingdom were far too frightened to impose. 'Humbug' was the term which J. H. Thomas, with characteristic infelicity of expression, applied to the proposals, and Mr Bennett, like Laurier before him, returned home empty-handed.

Just as South Africa's future is linked with that of gold, so also, until recently, the price of wheat on the world market governed the destiny of Canada.

It was not among the sturdy French-Canadian peasantry of Quebec, who rival in their parsimony their blood-relations in the rocky Breton coast and along the valley of the Loire, nor in the syncopated, synthetic life of the Americanised towns of Eastern Canada, that the future of the Dominion seemed to lie, but in the wheat lands of the Middle West. In the fertile ochre soil of the rolling prairies (to give them the adjective which has become as

traditional as 'well-greaved' to the Greeks and 'wine-dark' to the Mediterranean) lay the staple wealth of Canada. But wheat farming had one inherent weakness: it was almost entirely divorced from the land—"not a mode of living, but a means of making money". The farmer kept no cattle or poultry; his provisions were bought in the towns, usually in tins, his life lacked the independence and variety of rural life in other countries. The result was that the slump, removing the only prop to his subsistence, left him destitute.

Before 1930, farmers had considered \$1 a bushel infamously low; when, therefore, in December of that year it fell to 50 cents, it seemed that the last trump had sounded and the end of the world was at hand. A series of good years had piled up an unsaleable surplus, and the markets abroad simultaneously had begun to contract owing to the post-War revival of wheat growing in European countries. This, together with the system of co-operative marketing through a wheat pool, whose custom of making an initial payment below the world price had a psychologically depressive effect on the market, and the world-wide rise in the value of money, caused a prodigious fall in prices. The Canadian farmer was literally thrown back to the old pioneer days. Robbed of his ability to buy goods, he was forced to rely more and more on the products of his own acres as his fathers had done before him.

Not only had he to face the destruction of world markets, but he soon had the stress of natural forces to contend with. The good years were over. In the summer of 1931 dust storms, the consequence of a long drought, swept some of the richest sections of the wheat country, removing the precious top-soil and turning them into

deserts. Men were fighting for their lives against a double disaster. A writer in the *Round Table* described the situation in terms of a war campaign. The extent of the distress is shown by the fact that out of a population of 900,000 in one prairie province, 300,000 were being entirely provided for out of public relief.

In the face of what amounted to a national disaster, the Government showed a strange lethargy. Its cure for all ills was an increase in tariffs, which soon reached a record high level. The object of this policy was to replace shrinking foreign markets by a protected home one. Its principal defect was that the Canadian market was too small to replace the former effectively, and this was aggravated by the fact that the purchasing power of the great rural section of the community had shrunk after the collapse of agricultural prices.

The Government placed many hopes on the outcome of the 1932 Imperial Economic Conference. But although concessions were gained from Great Britain and several of the Dominions, the tariff policy of Canada prevented any great achievements from being made. Moreover, Mr Bennett's high-pressure methods of negotiation failed to impress the other delegates and led to some unseemly bargaining. The Ottawa Conference, if it did nothing else, proved that the fundamental link between the members of the Commonwealth is not the economic one.

One of the most formidable problems which the Government had to face during these years was the deficit on the State-owned Canadian National Railway, which, during the eight years of prosperity, had amounted to \$86 millions. During the period of optimism at the beginning of the century, when the economic expansion of the Dominion seemed limitless, a huge railway system had

been built, far beyond the needs of the population. Of the three original trans-continental lines, the Canadian Northern and the Grand Trunk Pacific were amalgamated and taken over by the Government, while the powerful Canadian Pacific remained in the hands of a private company. The competition between the two systems during the early years of the slump was intense, and had the Canadian National not been supported out of national taxation, it must certainly have collapsed. The Bennett ministry, after a report of the Duff Commission, attempted by legislation in 1933 to control this competition, but without much success.

The failure of the Government to achieve even a modest return to prosperity aroused a perhaps unreasonable feeling of exasperation in the breasts of the public. Its difficulties were severe, but its promises had been confident and grandiose, and its failure was apparently complete. Across the border Mr Roosevelt was beginning his spectacular 'New Deal' for the 'forgotten man'—one of those curious personalities who live in the terminology of politics, in company with the 'man in the street' and the 'average man'. Canadian eyes looked south, envying their neighbours' Government, which at least had accompanied promises by action, and turned to emphasise their displeasure with the Bennett ministry by voting overwhelmingly against its candidates at a series of Federal by-elections, and by ejecting the Conservatives from office at provincial elections in British Columbia and Nova Scotia.

The sensitiveness of Canadian politics to developments in the United States was shown by the events of 1934. In January Mr Stevens, the Minister of Trade and Commerce, made a speech attacking the big buyers of manufactured goods and primary products, and indulged

in a violent onslaught against big business generally, much in the same way as Roosevelt had lashed out at the 'money changers' in the United States. A Government Commission was set up under Stevens to investigate business methods in the Dominion and especially the 'price spreads' and the reason for the low wages paid to producers and the high prices paid by consumers. Shortly afterwards the Government brought in legislation to establish a central bank and passed the Natural Products Marketing Act which gave it wide powers to control the sale of all agricultural products by means of a central board, while at the same time the code system which President Roosevelt had inaugurated under the sign of the 'Blue Eagle' was adopted by some individual industries and even found its way into the legislation of a number of provinces.

The classic defeats of Conservatives at the Ontario and Saskatchewan elections, however, showed that this progressive move on the part of the Bennett ministry was without effect. In the meantime the Stevens Commission on Price Spreads continued its investigation; but in October 1934 Mr Stevens published an indictment of big business, which resulted in his resignation and eventual departure to found a new party called the Reconstruction Party, the life of which was rather summarily cut short at the General Election a year later, when Mr Stevens was its only successful candidate. Mr Bennett's sudden tack to the left, or more properly 'to port', was continued by a series of broadcasts given in January 1935 with the object of explaining *his* New Deal—another leaf taken from Mr Roosevelt's note-book, for the President had used this method of explaining his policy to the nation in his fireside talks during and after his election.

The Prime Minister announced that he was in favour of increased governmental interference, that he intended to see fair play between producers, and consumers, and "to end trafficking in the health and happiness of Canadian citizens". This new move caused consternation in more rigidly Conservative circles and failed to stop the neap-tide of opposition which had been rising for nearly three years. Mr Bennett, moreover, was faced with the difficulty with which all Federal leaders have had to reckon. The powers given to the central government under the British North America Act were not sufficient to allow it to control and regiment the economic life of the country or pass general laws for social amelioration. To overcome this difficulty, the Government claimed that it was merely carrying out treaty obligations incurred as a signatory of the Convention of International Labour Conference. In this way, Acts setting up unemployment insurance, a forty-eight hour week and a minimum wage were passed, all of which were, however, later declared by the Privy Council to be *ultra vires* the Federal Government.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Bennett's burst of liberal activity, however, failed to save the Government when it faced a General Election in October 1935. In this the Liberals won 171 seats to the Conservatives' 39. High tariffs, which had alienated a number of powerful interests, returned like Banquo's ghost to confront the latter, and their only consolation was that their fate had been experienced by other depression governments at the hands of ungrateful democracies all over the world. The Co-operative Commonwealth Federation, which was the successor of the old Farmers' Party and whose programme and leader were both mildly socialistic, accompanied by the Social Creditors coming

<sup>1</sup> cf. Ch. VII, p. 77.



from Alberta and Saskatchewan, formed a 'ginger' group with twenty-four seats.

The sudden rise to prominence of Social Credit in Alberta under the leadership of Mr Aberhart, whose utterances from the Prophetic Bible Institute had all the quaintness and unorthodoxy of the Old Testament prophets, was due mainly to the eagerness of the despondent agricultural voter to grasp at any wisp of straw which afforded hope of salvation. The history of the movement in the province has not, up to the present, given any grounds for believing that Major Douglas has discovered the formula for continuous prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

Almost the first action of the new Government was to negotiate a trade agreement with the United States covering principally agricultural products. It had been the proposal of just such a treaty which had swept the Liberals from office in 1911, but its obvious advantages has made reciprocity a part of the policies of both parties. Besides this, since the War the attitude of Canada to the United States has changed.

That acute Frenchman, M. André Siegfried, came away from a visit to Canada apparently fully satisfied that eventually the Dominion would be absorbed by the Republic. Of the population, only half are of British origin, and a great many of the settlers, especially in the prairie provinces, have migrated from America. Canadian life is superficially hardly distinguishable from that of her southern neighbour. Her educational system is similar to that of the United States; the mould of politics (though the Canadian voter has usually shown a more Baconian conception of the ethics of political corruption) is the same; idiom, humour, amusements are American rather

<sup>1</sup> Alberta has been the first Canadian province to default on a public loan.

than British. Generally, the Canadian feels more at home among Americans than he does in the formal English atmosphere. Again, over half of the total foreign trade of the Dominion crosses her southern border. Owing to the guarantee provided by the Monroe Doctrine she is inclined to follow the United States in matters of foreign policy; with the latter, she fears the danger of being involved in a European war. In this respect Canadians suffer from the same lack of realism regarding affairs in the Old World. The "three thousand miles of frontier without a single gun" argument so often used by citizens of both countries is admirable but irrelevant.

But there are counteracting forces of no less importance. Canada during the last hundred years has developed a national consciousness—and is proud of it. Politically, its citizens are more jealous of any attempt to make them dependent on America than they are of interference by the Mother Country. The tendency of the United States to ignore and occasionally patronise the Dominion keeps this sentiment aflame. An American Senator, who proposed, jokingly no doubt, that Canadian territory should be handed over to the United States by way of payment for British War debts, followed in the steps of Representative Champ Clark and President Taft, whose extraordinary tactlessness helped to defeat reciprocity in 1911. There is, too, an element of dignity in Canadian public life which has ever been absent from the United States, a tradition coming from far-off days when Governor Simcoe opened the first Parliament of Lower Canada in a rough barracks storeroom, clad in full uniform, after inspecting a guard of honour and making an elaborate speech from the throne. This tradition is continued by the presence of the Governor-General and his Court.

Again, the French-Canadian population, if lukewarm in its attitude to the Commonwealth, is consistently opposed to the United States. It has no wish to be plunged into the melting-pot, where its individuality must necessarily disappear in the mass-produced citizenship of the Republic. Although it may dislike the dangers of the imperial connection, it fears still more the growth of American materialism, and in the latter contingency, Lord Elgin's observation that the last hand which would wave the British flag in North America would belong to a French-Canadian, remains as true to-day as it was a hundred years ago.

Thus the similarities between the two countries, though striking, are superficial, while the differences are more subtle, but more permanent. Above all, there remains this fact, that a vast majority of Canadians, including the French, prefer to be the liegemen of King George.

The future of the French-Canadian population is a source of anxiety both to its own leaders and to the British Canadians. The French are a colony without a mother country. Their memories and traditions go back to Bourbon France, which the Revolution destroyed. As loyal Catholics they are out of sympathy with French anti-clericalism of to-day. Though certain ties of language and culture still remain, these are not sufficient to keep alive any sense of loyalty to France. As far as Britain is concerned, she is regarded with a certain respect as the instrument chosen by Providence to enable the French-Canadian nation to flourish and expand.

There is, moreover, comparatively little contact between the two races in Canada except on the few occasions when they meet in public or business life. Taken as a whole the French in Quebec and elsewhere

form the proletariat of the towns and the peasantry on the land—slaves, as the more extreme nationalists maintain, to 'Anglo-Saxon finance'.

The depression consequently produced among the population of Quebec a more intense nationalism instead, as in so many cases elsewhere, of a movement towards revolutionary economics. Though the younger politicians spoke wildly of a Laurentian Republic, this movement found constitutional expression in the defeat of the soiled and static Liberal ministry of M. Taschereau after thirty-nine years of power, by a newly formed Union-Nationale Party led by a young lawyer, M. Maurice Duplessis. When it took office in 1936 this party had a rather vague but essentially 'progressive' policy, which later crystallised into a form of 'Clerical Fascism' with all the accoutrements of the Corporate State. Primarily, its object is to capture the economic control of Quebec, which is at present in the hands of British-Canadian and American industrialists, and to do this by Government action. This movement has the support of the Church and particularly of the eminent Cardinal Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec, who, with the other Catholic leaders, looks upon 'corporatism' as a defence against communism and anti-clericalism, and who had feared that the rigours of the depression would cause the spread of these doctrines. Under church influence the Duplessis ministry has introduced an Act with the object of driving underground subversive activities, and in which are many of the alarming and repressive characteristics of Italian fascism. As the Federal and Provincial Parties are closely allied, Mr Mackenzie King's Government must be affected by the rise of Duplessis to power and, in the event of the latter breaking adrift from the official Liberals in Federal

politics, Mr King would lose the commanding position which he now occupies in the Dominion House of Commons. So far the Government has dealt very tenderly with the susceptibilities of the provincial group.

The French-Canadian problem is biological as well as political. The fertility of the race has resulted in its increase from 2,542,743 in 1921 to 2,927,990 in 1931. In 1934 the birthrate in Quebec was 25.5 per 1,000, whereas in Ontario it was 17.5 and in British Columbia 13.5 per 1,000. Unless this increase stops, or immigration from other countries begins again, the French-Canadians must in time reach equality with the rest of the population, entailing political results which cannot be foreseen.

If provincialism is particularly violent in Quebec it is also strong in the British provinces, which have so far opposed any tendency on the part of the Federal Governments to encroach on their rights. It was on this rock that Mr Bennett's 'New Deal' struck and sank, for all its major acts were declared *ultra vires* in 1937.<sup>1</sup> As a result, the increasing burdens of providing social services on a large scale, e.g. unemployment insurance, pensions, and public works, have fallen on the shoulders of the provinces, assisted in some degree by grants from the Federal Treasury. In the depression years when these were very heavy, the resources of these governments were gradually exhausted, and Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, and even Ontario, found themselves on the edge of bankruptcy. They, however, preferred this to accepting Federal aid subject to supervision of expenditure. If, as appears likely, Government action increases, the powers of the Ottawa Parliament will have to be widened either

<sup>1</sup> The powers of the provincial legislatures were specifically safeguarded from encroachments by the Federal Parliament after the passing of the Statute of Westminster, by section 7 of that Act.

by an Act of the British Parliament or in some way acceptable to the provinces. The growth of racialism in Quebec makes this extraordinarily difficult. Early in 1936 Mr Mackenzie King called a meeting of prime ministers to discuss methods for enabling Canada to alter her Constitution without reference to the Mother Country; though no scheme proved acceptable, the issue will have to be faced again in the near future.

So Canada remains torn between three conflicting influences, the American, the British, and the French—between economic and geographical interests on the one hand and traditional and racial ties on the other, between isolation and association, between the New World and the Old. The links with Britain may slowly slacken as the generations pass, the memories of the homeland may grow dimmer with the years, but in the place of the old loyalty stands a new one, owed not so much to Great Britain alone, as to the Imperial Commonwealth as a whole. For it is only as a member of the Commonwealth that Canada can hope to play a part in the affairs of the world, and escape eventual domination by the United States. "It is our hope and conviction", said Mr Mackenzie King in July 1937, "that the spectacle of a free and united Commonwealth bending all its energies towards ensuring peace . . . will prove alike a salutary influence and a source of inspiration for a world which desires security above all else . . ." It can only do this if all its members are willing to undertake the responsibilities which the membership implies, and that Canada will do this in the future as she has in the past must be self-evident.

## CHAPTER XIV

### AUSTRALIA

The narrow ways of English folk,  
Are not for such as we;  
They bear the long-accustomed yoke  
Of staid conservancy :  
But all our roads are new and strange,  
And through our blood there runs  
The vagabonding love of change  
That drove us westward of the range  
And westward of the suns.

A. B. PATERSON : *Rio Grande's Last Race*

THE same diversity of light and shadow which characterised imperial policy in the African and American colonies is to be found in the history of Australia. The problems were different, but no more easy to solve. True, no other European race had attempted to settle there before the English came, and there was no native population able to offer resistance to the white man. Consequently there was no frontier problem as in South Africa, and nothing to correspond with the racial conflict which had so often darkened, and on occasion enlivened, the history of Canada. At the same time there was no supply of labour easily obtainable with which the country could be developed. Australia was an empty land, offering the colonist only the facilities of soil and climate, and opposing him with all the forces which untouched nature can muster against an intruder.

The first project of colonisation resulted from the loss of the American Colonies. Transportation across the

Atlantic had served to relieve the pressure on the English prisons, which a desperately harsh criminal code had rendered uncomfortably full. After 1783, however, this dumping ground was lost, and the Government, looking for a site for another penal settlement, bethought themselves of the land on which Captain Cook had hoisted the British flag some fifteen years before, and which he had called New South Wales. Their interest in the project was increased by the necessity of finding an asylum for the United Empire Loyalists, many of whom had come over to England.

The problem of the Loyalists was left to find its own solution, but after much hesitation the first penal expedition was dispatched to Australia, and on the 25th January 1788 the convoy, which consisted of 750 prisoners of both sexes and 200 marines under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip, anchored in what is now Sydney harbour.

The early years saw the colony faced with the dangers and difficulties which have accompanied the pioneer all over the world. Twice the settlement nearly starved, but the store-ships arrived in time; the natural indiscipline of the colonists was only kept in check by Phillip's strong hand. He and his successors until 1824 exercised despotic powers, for obviously a penal colony was no place to experiment with the niceties of democratic practice. It was upon the personal and varied capacities of men like Phillip, Bligh (whose ability to arouse mutinous instincts among his subordinates on land was as great as it had been at sea), and the humanitarian Macquarie, that the progress of the colony depended.

The presence of three classes, free settlers, emancipists, and convicts, caused trouble. In the early years the first were chiefly officers of the regiments stationed in the colony and drawn especially from the celebrated New



South Wales Corps raised for garrison duty there. These were given generous grants of land, and formed a jealous oligarchy who used all their influence to exclude freed prisoners from the civic life of the community. Macquarie had tried to govern on the principle that when a man had completed his sentence he became a citizen with full rights. He appointed them to positions of responsibility and mixed with them socially. The opposition he encountered from the oligarchy, however, was sufficient to obtain his recall, but the struggle continued. Under his successor, Sir Thomas Brisbane, the colony began its real political development. Free immigration was encouraged and this was stimulated by the termination of the Napoleonic wars. The more desperate criminals were sent to Norfolk Island and Van Diemen's Land. As a better type of settler began to arrive the political structure of the colony became correspondingly more stable. By the Act of 1823, the Governor was given a nominated legislative council of seven (later increasing to fourteen), a Supreme Court was established, and civilian juries took the place of military ones.

Gradually the area of the colony grew. The years after 1813, when Braxland crossed the Blue Mountains for the first time, saw the beginning of a series of great journeys of discovery. Hovell and Hume in 1824-5 travelled from Sydney overland to Port Phillip. Three years after, Charles Sturt's discovery of the mouth of the Murray River dissolved the legend of a great inland sea into which the rivers of New South Wales flowed, and Mitchell in 1836 saw for the first time the lush valleys of Western Victoria, which he named *Australia Felix*, and which, so he wrote, were fit "to become eventually one of the greatest nations of the earth".

After the explorers came the vanguard of the settlers and squatters, spreading with their sheep and cattle across the plains and valleys, slowly adding to the wealth of the colony and to its export trade.

During the first years of the century, when the clammy, nerveless hand of Liberal *laissez-faire* was beginning to grip the Colonial Office, the attitude of the Imperial Government was one of studied indifference. After 1830, however, owing to the enthusiasm of Gibbon Wakefield and his colleagues, among whom, as we have seen, was Durham, a small but intelligent group of men became interested in colonial problems. Wakefield, while still a young man, had incautiously eloped with a ward-in-Chancery and had spent the next three years in jail. While there, he had plenty of time to contemplate his future which seemed inevitably to lie abroad, and he thereby became interested in a scheme of systematic colonisation.

He first published his theories in 1829 in a *Letter from Sydney, the Principal Town in Australasia*. Previously colonial lands had been granted away indiscriminately by successive governors to Government servants and wealthy speculators. Wakefield proposed that the land should be sold for a definite price, e.g. £1 per acre, and that the money so accumulated, should be used to bring out and finance craftsmen and labourers to do the work of development. Although the plan was never put properly into practice, and had certain dire defects, and although its inventor spent most of his time trying to break down the massy walls of official incompetence, it at least kept alive a flicker of interest in colonial affairs.

The first attempt to put his theory into practice came as the result of the failure of another scheme. A certain

Captain Stirling had returned to England with the story of the rich land in Western Australia round the mouth of the Swan River. A number of financiers put money into the project of settlement. When, however, the first colonists arrived in 1828, they found that the land was not so good as Stirling had thought. Hundreds of thousands of acres were immediately granted away to the first-comers, which meant that those who came later had to go many miles from the sea to find properties to which there were no roads. Consequently many lost their money and others went on to the eastern colonies. Though it eventually survived, this first adventure was a disastrous failure.

The society which Wakefield had formed to promote his ideas pounced upon this incident to point out the advantages of their own scheme. Eventually, after experiencing considerable difficulty, they obtained parliamentary support for the "systematic colonisation" of South Australia—the territory round the Great Bight. No convicts were to be admitted and all land was to be sold at the standard fee of £1 per acre. This great price prevented the poorer colonists from buying farms, and the wages which they demanded were absurdly high. Rich speculators who could buy the land were unable to get labour to develop it and hung about Adelaide speculating in land prices. A silly situation thus arose in which, with huge and rich lands at their doorsteps, the population remained in town to starve. To provide work, Gawler, the Governor, began a costly public works programme financed on the credit of the authorities at home. Within five years, the whole colony was bankrupt and the Imperial Government, which had been assured that the scheme would cost it nothing, was invited to foot a bill of some hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The principal problem, which troubled New South Wales during this period, was that of convictism. After 1830, free immigration had outstripped transportation and public opinion had begun to rise against the whole system. A parliamentary commission exposed the cruelty and uselessness of that form of punishment. It was abolished in 1840, and when nine years later the home Government tried to revive it in a new guise, the good townsmen of Sydney copied their fellow-colonists at Capetown and Melbourne and with sinister references to the 'Boston Tea-party' refused to allow the convicts to land. The British Government gave way and, except in the case of Western Australia, where it continued until 1868, an Imperial Act ended for all time the practice condemning unfortunates

To take a trip in a government ship  
Ten thousand miles away.

While those of convict origin had outnumbered the free settlers, the chance of obtaining self-government was obviously remote. But the growth of the numbers and the 'community-consciousness' of the free settlers brought a demand for a greater share in the government of the colony. Under the leadership of William Wentworth, a radical journalist and patriot, the free colonists began a long agitation, first for representative government with elected members on the Governor's council, and later for full self-government. The old cry of no taxation without the people's consent, which had been the slogan of the English Parliament in its struggle with a Stuart King, and of the American people against a British Parliament, seventy years later, rallied their descendants on another continent in a remoter part of the world. The grant of majority representation on the Governor's council in 1840

was the first concession given by the Mother Country to this youthful democracy.

Another important problem which New South Wales had to face about this time, was the agitation in the Port Phillip region for separation from the mother-colony. The overland route between Sydney and Melbourne was very difficult and the sea route long. The latter was jealous and felt, not without some justice, that the Sydney authorities neglected its interests. Eventually the Committee of the Board of Trade and Plantations recommended that the demand of Melbourne should be granted and, on the suggestion of New South Wales, it was given a representative constitution similar to its own.

By the same Imperial Act, representative government was extended to South Australia and Tasmania. The former, after its early troubles, had the luck to get George Grey, then a young officer with some experience of exploration and administration in Western Australia, as Governor. His firmness and good sense succeeded in bringing some order out of the chaos which Gawler had left. Public works were cut down to the minimum and the fall in land prices gave the smaller man the opportunity to buy property. The prosperity of the colony immediately increased, and this was further promoted when lead and silver mines were found and rich copper workings were opened at Kapunda and the euphonious Burra Burra. Having seen the colony safely on its feet, Grey left to continue his great service in New Zealand.

Tasmania (Van Diemen's Land) was also just recovering from the first uneasy years. In spite of the influx of free settlers after 1822, the colony continued to receive the worst type of transportee. Though Governor Arthur, during his twelve years of office (1824-36) ruled the colony

with a benevolent but heavy hand, crime was common as the result of the escape of prisoners from the Government labour gangs. Tasmania also had difficulty with its native population, who were of a different race from the Australian aboriginal. The exile of these wild, unhappy, primitive people is one of the most discreditable episodes in British relations with the native, and ended in their extinction.

When transportation to New South Wales ceased in 1840, Tasmania received increased numbers, and because of this she was refused the right of representative government, which had been granted to the mother-colony in that year. There was, however, a growing movement against convictism among the free settlers, and when in 1850 the island received its first representative constitution, the earliest act of that body was to forward a petition to the Imperial Government to have transportation stopped. This was done two years later. Thus, by the middle years of the century Australia had passed through the period of struggle and disappointment. The colonies which had hung perilously to the edge of the continent were firmly established. The shadow of the convict system which had lain so heavily and so long over East Australia had gone, leaving little behind it except an evil memory. The mysteries of the continent had been explored by the energy and daring of a series of great pioneers—and this work was carried yet further by Stuart, Leichhart, Burke and Willis—not a few of whom journeyed to find unknown graves in the great wilderness. With the coming of self-government in 1856, free Australia entered into the common heritage of its race at home and overseas. Lastly, with the growth of sheep and cattle-farming and the discovery of gold, silver, and copper

mines, it entered into a period of economic development, which continued almost without interruption until the outbreak of the Great War.

Gold has ever held an uncommonly powerful fascination for all men, and when on many occasions during the last century the rumour spread that it had been found in some place, no matter how remote, great crowds raced from all parts of the world to make their fortunes in the frozen Yukon or on the hot, dusty gullies of California or Witwatersrand, or at the Ophir and Ballarat districts of New South Wales and Victoria. The consuming madness which seized all Australia when the 'finds' were announced was more extraordinary than anywhere else. Melbourne was partly depopulated, ships' companies deserted immediately the vessels entered port, and Tasmania lost a third of its population. The police and magistrates, if not actually gold-miners, had their integrity quickly undermined by the huge wealth coming from the diggings. Adventurers and desperadoes and gamblers crowded to the 'finds', and in those early days the gold-fields were the toughest places in the world.

It was not surprising, therefore, that trouble occurred. The attempt of the Victorian Government to impose a licence met with immediate opposition and threw the whole of the gold fraternity into a ferment. The weakness of the authorities and the stealthy efforts of agitators turned what had been a healthy aversion to paying taxes into a political movement aiming at establishing a Victorian republic. The introduction of troops led to an assault on the rioters' position at the Eureka stockade and their subsequent rout.

After the excitement of the gold rushes had died down, the Australian states proceeded to take advantage of the

power given them in the constitutions of 1850 to suggest amendments to be submitted to the Imperial Parliament, and complete self-government was duly granted to them in 1855-6. Each constitution consisted of a Council, nominated in the case of New South Wales and elected in the case of Tasmania, South Australia, and Victoria, and an Assembly popularly elected in the case of South Australia by manhood suffrage, and in the others subject to a small property qualification. At the same time Queensland, which had so long been neglected, but had recently been receiving an increasing number of settlers, largely due to the energy of the combative Reverend Dr Lang, was given in 1859 a constitution similar to that of the other Australian states.

The internal political history of the colonies from the coming of self-government to the dawn of federation is one of mutual jealousies uneasily reconciled, of the gradual education of colonial politicians and electorates to their new responsibilities, and the emergence in each province of a Labour Party, which was destined to play an important part in federal politics in the next century.

In New South Wales, Sir John Robertson's Land Acts, which were intended to break up the great squatter properties in favour of closer settlement by smaller holders, caused a quarrel in 1861 between the Assembly and the Council, during which the Prime Minister persuaded the Governor to appoint a number of extra councillors to carry the Bills. This led to a deadlock, solved only by the appointment of the veteran Wentworth to the presidency of the upper chamber. In Victoria a similar conflict, this time over the question of tariffs, was only settled after the Government had resorted to all the less orthodox expedients of parliamentary procedure.

All the colonies showed themselves to be particularly



progressive democracies. Manhood and women's suffrage, voting by ballot and payment of members—the old Chartist demands, for many members of that movement had gone to Australia—were all introduced into one or other of the colonies long before they made their appearance in Great Britain. In 1890 Western Australia, where transportation had continued for longer than anywhere else, was given self-government, and after the discovery of gold at Kalgoorlie in 1893, began to catch up her sister-colonies, both in population and in prosperity.

The nation which was growing up under the southern skies was British, but with a difference born of the hotter sun and the droughts and winds and troubles of another island amid strange seas. The colonists who came out from home had been generally drawn from the well-to-do workers, who in Great Britain were just entering, through trade unions and a wider political franchise, into a new period of influence. It was natural that the same institutions and aims which they had known in the Mother Country, should develop in their new homes.

One of the most important invisible exports which went out from the British Isles during the nineteenth century to all the Dominions, to Europe and America, was trade unionism.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1881 a representative of the New South Wales Unions had won a seat in the Assembly, and by 1903 Labour parties had come into being in every state. Previously there had been scarcely any definite party difference, except between Free Traders and Protectionists, and ministries had been formed amid a welter of intricate manoeuvres similar to those which give a

<sup>1</sup> Many of the trade union leaders in Australia to-day were born and first served their apprenticeship in the movement in Great Britain, while Mr John Lewis, who is fighting to establish national unions in the United States through his Committee of Industrial Organisation, came from Wales.

slightly ludicrous aspect to French politics to-day. After the rise of the Labour Party, especially after the federation, the indistinct party attachments developed into two groups—the Socialists and the anti-Socialists.

The strength of Labour during the formative years of Australian history, besides giving an exceedingly progressive colour to legislation, provided the nation with one of its great political principals, that of a 'White Australia'. This did not originate in the colour-consciousness of the British race, but in the fear of the Australian worker that the introduction of cheap native labour would lower the standard of living of its white competitor. Thus, Chinese immigration was stopped, in spite of the protests of the Imperial Government, and shortly after the federation was completed, the employment of Kanakas on the Queensland plantations was prohibited for the same reason.

During the latter half of the century the placidity of the Pacific was disturbed by the sudden interest taken in that region by European powers caught by the annexation fever, which was to end in the partition of the greater part of the earth's dry land. In the case of the Pacific, it resulted in the Germans establishing sovereignty over Samoa, Papua, and a miscellaneous collection of smaller islands, in France taking New Caledonia, Tahiti, and the Marquesas, in the United States getting Hawaii and some of the Samoan islands, and in Great Britain, with considerable reluctance, assuming control over the rest.

The arrival of European powers in the neighbourhood of their coasts disturbed the Australian states, which had hoped to establish a Monroe doctrine for the Pacific region south of the Equator, and gave an impetus to the movement towards federation which had been in existence for many years. The Imperial Government in 1850 had

proposed such a scheme: Wentworth had founded his 'General Association of the Australian Colonies' in 1857; a Federal Council was set up by an Imperial Act of 1885, but it had very limited powers, and only four of the colonies were continuously members. Under the impetus of foreign intrusion, however, federation societies were formed, conventions held, referendums taken, and finally, after much talk and indecision, the Commonwealth of Australia was set up by an Imperial Act of July 1900.

The Constitution followed that of the United States more closely than the Canadian had done. The residuary powers were given to the states and not to the central government, which was allotted control over the external trade and foreign policy, currency, tariffs, industrial arbitration in the case of a dispute extending beyond the boundaries of any state, defence and immigration. Questions of constitutional interpretation are referred to the High Court of Australia, and with its permission to the Privy Council. The Constitution may be changed only after a referendum has been taken, in which a majority of the states and a majority of the voters have declared themselves in favour of the alteration.

The position of the Australian states also differs from those of the Canadian provinces. Their governors are appointed by the Crown on the advice of the British Government and communicate directly with it. For the rest, the Constitutions of the states remain, with small alterations, the same as they were in pre-federation days.<sup>1</sup>

The Federal Parliament consists of two houses. The Senate, to which six members are sent by each state voting as a single constituency, three being elected every third

<sup>1</sup> Members of the New South Wales Legislative Council have been elected since 1933 instead of being nominated.

year, has, like the House of Lords, no control over finance. The House of Representatives has seventy-five members, elected by universal suffrage by the states on a basis of population, for a three years' term. Should the Senate twice reject a Bill passed by the lower house, the Prime Minister may obtain a double dissolution and appeal to the country for its decision on the question at issue.<sup>1</sup>

The new Constitution began unpropitiously under the shadow of a great drought which devastated Australian agriculture, and, owing to the lack of a settled party-system during the early years, federal politics were in great confusion. The growth, however, of the Labour Party with a disciplined organisation and domineering caucus which controlled the policies and personnel of the ministries, stabilised the position and drove the Conservatives and Liberals into union. Labour came into power in 1908, 1910, and again in September 1914, under Mr Fisher, and during the first weeks of the War rose to the occasion no less bravely than did imperial governments elsewhere. A 'Naval and Military Expeditionary Force' occupied the German Polynesian colonies and the Australian Navy hunted the enemy warships out of the Pacific. In April 1915 the 'Anzacs' landed on the Gallipoli peninsula:

Fair broke the day this morning  
Against the Dardanelles;  
The breeze blew soft, the morn's cheeks  
Were cold as cold sea-shells.

But other shells are waiting  
Across the Aegean sea,  
Shrapnel and high explosive,  
Shells and hells for me.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In 1927 the new Federal capital at Canberra was opened by George VI, when Duke of York.

<sup>2</sup> Patrick Shaw-Stewart, killed in France, 1917, quoted by Maurice Baring in *Have You Anything to Declare?*

There they held grimly to their position, until it was finally realised that Churchill's great plan, which might have brought a quick peace, had failed, and they were withdrawn, leaving their dead in a land which from older times had been not unfamiliar with heroes.

At home the country was divided over the question of conscription, which the thinning stream of volunteers seemed likely to render necessary. Twice, in 1916, when Mr Hughes, who had succeeded Fisher, led a Labour ministry, and again in 1917, when he was at the head of a National Coalition Government, referendums were taken on the subject and defeated. Even so, 330,000 Australians served in the imperial armies during the Great War, and 396 million pounds were provided for its conduct. In 1919 Mr Hughes went to represent his "youthful conquering pioneer state" at Versailles, and it was to his typically Australian sense of humour that one of the few witticisms born of those gloomy days was due. "Mr 'Ughes, I have 'card that in early life you were a cannibal," said M. Clemenceau to him on one occasion. "Believe me, Mr President," said the Commonwealth Prime Minister, "that has been greatly exaggerated."<sup>1</sup>

Mr Hughes returned from the Peace Conference in triumph. His services as a War Prime Minister had been considerable, but, like his colleague in Great Britain, his autocratic and effervescent personality had made him many enemies. Labour hated him as a renegade; the new Country Party, which represented the agricultural interests, disliked him on more personal grounds. Even among his own party his methods were inclined to irritate. Though he won an Antipodean 'khaki' election in 1919

<sup>1</sup>cf. Winston Churchill: *World Crisis*, vol. v, p. 154.

and attended the Imperial Conference in 1921, antagonism to him and his Government was mounting at home, and when, after the Federal election in 1922, at which the Nationalists gained thirty-two seats to Labour's twenty-nine, it became clear that an alliance with the Country Party would have to be made, it was obvious this could not be done under Mr Hughes's leadership. He accordingly retired to the enjoyment of the £25,000 presented to him for his war services, and Mr S. M. Bruce and Dr Page, the Country Party leader, formed a ministry.

By 1924 Australia was experiencing a wave of great prosperity, due to the reconstruction expenditure, the demand for Australian goods during the years after the War, and to the generous payment made to ex-service men. As a corollary to this prosperity came an epidemic of strikes in the shipping and other trades. The strike among merchant seamen was led by the president of the Seamen's Union, Thomas Walsh, and eventually assumed a world-wide proportion. As a result of his activities during this period, the Federal Government arrested Walsh and brought him before a Board set up under powers given them in the Constitution to control immigration. This Board was given authority to deport persons found to be promoting industrial strife—a punishment which was without parallel among British democracies. On the application of Walsh, the High Court ruled that the action of the Federal Government was *ultra vires* and he was immediately released. Another unique measure for which the Government was responsible was one making voting at elections compulsory. Its object was to save candidates the expense of conveying constituents to the polls, but it is doubtful whether the addition of a

mass of unintelligent and lazy votes would be likely to promote the efficiency of a democracy.

Immediately after the Walsh incident, the Government decided to go to the country on an appeal for support in its attempts to protect Australia from the machinations of Communists and 'wreckers', and during the election its speakers painted lurid and perhaps not wholly inaccurate pictures of the sinister inflow into the country of ideas and gold from Moscow.

Its first measure, on being returned with an increased majority in October 1924, was to take greater powers to deal with industrial unrest. At the same time a referendum, held to give the Federal Government fuller control of industrial conditions and social services, was defeated. To show that this rejection was not due to the conservatism of the people, another referendum to transfer to the Commonwealth all state debts, amounting to £672 millions, was passed. Its effect was to break down one of the chief barriers between the different parts of Australia. It was also an extension of the tendency to co-ordinate their finances, begun in 1923 by the establishment of a Loan Council, composed of the various treasurers, to consider the loan requirements of each state and to prevent their flotations from clashing with each other.

The year 1927 saw a renewed outbreak of strikes, mill-workers, carters, cooks, and seamen, with the last of whom this form of occupation had become almost a habit, this time being involved. The efforts of the Arbitration Court to settle these disputes were becoming increasingly ineffective, and the Government made up its mind to abolish the system. Industrial arbitration had been so long established in Australia that the attempt proved unsuccessful, and after a homeric debate the

measure was defeated in Parliament and the Government resigned. The election which followed in October 1929 resulted in its very heavy defeat, and even Mr Bruce lost his seat. Labour was returned with a large majority.

J. H. Scullin, who now became Prime Minister, in spite of his triumph was in immediate difficulties. The budgets of the last three years had shown a growing deficit in place of the handsome surpluses of the earlier period. At the same time, dark clouds of depression were banking up against Australia and warning drops foretold the deluge which was to come. As it was, the price of wool had fallen by 30 per cent, unemployment was rising, and the country was experiencing a sense of tension born of fear.

But Mr Scullin's problems did not end there. In spite of the iron discipline of the Labour caucus, the New South Wales members of his party were restive, and became more truculent than ever after the return to power of Mr Lang in 1930 at the New South Wales State elections. Then his Treasurer, Mr Theodore, resigned after being accused of a scandalous transaction in his own state of Queensland, connected with the purchase of the Mungana mines.<sup>1</sup> Lastly, during the Prime Minister's absence at the Imperial Conference in 1930, further dissension arose owing to the inclination among some of his supporters to flirt with inflation. These were opposed by Mr Lyons, the acting Premier, and the more responsible members of the Cabinet, who proposed to cut down expenditure in order to balance the Budget.

The dangerously tolerant way in which Australians view delinquencies in public life, led to the return of Mr Theodore to the Treasurership in March 1931, and the subsequent resignation of Mr Lyons by way of protest.

<sup>1</sup> He was later acquitted of the charge.



The situation, bad enough already in all conscience, was made worse by the announcement by Mr Lang at the end of the same month that New South Wales intended to default. "Unemployed men at home", he said, "must come before bond-holders overseas." The interest on these loans was eventually met in London by the Federal Treasury, since it had accepted responsibility under the Financial Agreement of 1928, and it subsequently applied to the High Court for a writ to recover the money from the New South Wales Government.

In May a final attempt was made to take the situation in hand, and at a meeting of the Loan Council it was agreed that each state should take steps to balance its Budget, cuts should be made in salaries, expenditure reduced, and State and Federal liabilities, amounting to £600 millions, converted.<sup>1</sup> An attempt to make this last compulsory was opposed by the new United Australia Party formed in 1931 out of the remnant of the old Nationalist Party and the dissenting Labour members led by Mr Lyons.

No sooner had this progress been made than in June Mr Lang, who had made no attempt to implement his obligations under this plan, tried to rush through the New South Wales legislature a special taxation measure, and when it was rejected by the Council, demanded that the Governor should swamp the upper house with his supporters. Sir Philip Game refused, and Mr Lang, who had no money to pay his Civil Servants, was only saved by a last-moment grant from the Loan Council. The Labour Prime Minister's behaviour was becoming increasingly frantic. In February 1932 he announced again that he intended to default. The Federal Government,

<sup>1</sup> This became known as the Premier's Plan.

in reply, passed the Financial Agreement Enforcement Act, 1932, which gave it power to sequester the revenues of a defaulting state. When, however, having paid the interest on the New South Wales loans, federal officers tried to collect these revenues, Mr Lang closed the Tax Office and ordered heads of departments not to pay money to the Commonwealth Bank. On this, Sir Philip Game suddenly dismissed him for acting illegally and, at the ensuing election, Lang was summarily ejected from office by Mr Stevens and his United Australia Party.

While the New South Wales Premier pursued his errant way, the Federal Labour Party had been experiencing more heavy weather. Mr Theodore, for all his supposed financial acumen, had got into trouble again, and a motion to inquire into his transactions ended in the defeat and resignation of the Government. The election which followed was bitter and personal—"Yes, we have no Mungana's," greeted Mr Theodore at his meetings—and ended in a victory for Mr Lyons, who was returned with a majority over all other parties.

Until the depression the Australian economy had been based on two things—an expanding primary production and heavily protected secondary industries. The first had, until 1931, been able to maintain itself in the open market unaided, but after that it became increasingly obvious that Government help was necessary, and this took the form of bounties on wheat and other produce, currency depreciation, and stimulation of the home price by marketing control. Many hopes were placed upon the Ottawa Conference, but Australia's dogged determination to maintain her tariffs made any considerable progress impossible. The problem was further complicated by a change in British policy. Great Britain was, and is,

Australia's greatest overseas market, and the introduction of Mr Elliot's Agricultural schemes in 1933, as in the case of New Zealand, meant its restriction in favour of the home producer. Australian rural economy had been built upon the assumption that the British market would expand indefinitely. Now that it showed every sign of diminishing, Australia had to try to find some alternative markets in Asia or Europe. It was unfortunate, but natural, that their unwillingness to lower their tariffs, and the anxiety of the British Government to limit Australian imports, caused at any rate a temporary feeling of resentment between the two countries.

In spite of these new problems, the country achieved a moderate degree of recovery by the end of 1933. The expected deficit for that year turned into a surplus, and the Commonwealth Arbitration Court, in April 1934, when reviewing the basic wage, found that some measure of confidence had returned, though former prosperity was far from being restored. It was sufficient, at any rate, to bring Mr Lyons back in coalition with the Country Party when a General Election took place in 1934.

The attempt to find new markets for Australian produce continued. Sir Henry Gullett was appointed Minister in charge of Trade Treaties, and when the Australian delegation were in London at the time of the Jubilee the revision of the Ottawa Agreements was discussed. In 1936 Australia began a trade diversion policy, by which she attempted to withdraw her trade by means of tariffs and import licences from those countries which sold to her, but failed to make proportionate purchases in return, e.g. Japan and the U.S.A., and to divert to those which bought from her extensively, e.g. Great Britain.

Though her economic war with Japan was terminated

in December 1936, and trade agreements have been made with Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, and South Africa, the policy of the Dominion, like so many other countries, has tended towards increased protection, for the alteration of the policy of Great Britain is causing a revolution in the whole of the Australian economic structure.

The other great problem of recent years has been the relations between the Commonwealth and the states. In the case of every federation, the crisis has necessitated adjustments in the powers of the central and subordinate governments. The attempts of Mr Roosevelt in America and Mr Bennett in Canada to increase the powers of their respective administrations to regulate economic forces and speed up national recovery, were both ruled *ultra vires* by the courts of law. Mr Lyons's legislation which essayed something similar met with the same fate.

The right of the Federal Government to control interstate commerce by means of marketing schemes, was disallowed by the decision of the Privy Council in December 1936 in connection with the Dried Fruits Marketing Acts, 1928-35, and a proposal to increase the powers of the Central Government was defeated at a referendum taken in March 1937. The vote against this change in the Constitution was probably given less on account of antipathy to the economic policy involved than on account of a reaction to the tendency which had existed since 1929, for the powers of the Central Government to expand at the expense of the states. The principal step in this direction had been the establishment of the Loan Council, and the defeat of Mr Lang had further increased the financial influence of the Commonwealth at the expense of the states. At the same time the responsibilities of the latter for public services was increasing, and owing to the

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comparative restriction of their sources of revenue, they were becoming more and more dependent upon grants from the Federal Treasury. They were, in the words of Mr Deakin, though legally free, "financially bound to the chariot wheels of the Commonwealth". In fact that alone can explain the defeat of a referendum held simultaneously to give the Commonwealth control over aviation, which was obviously most desirable.

Other difficulties inherent in a federal system were further shown by the petition to the King by Western Australia for permission to secede. In Western Australia, the secession movement was due partly to psychological and partly to economic motives. As a primary producing country, the tariffs imposed to protect the eastern industrialist harmed her markets, and her geographical isolation made co-operation between her and the other states difficult. Moreover, the latter's tendency to ignore her grievances increased her irritation. A referendum in favour of secession had been taken and carried by two votes to one in 1934, and the appeal had then been lodged before the Imperial Parliament to pass legislation to give effect to this vote. After a long inquiry, a Joint Select Committee of both Houses decided that they had no power to hear the appeal. It is in fact exceedingly improbable that a state now may break the 'indissoluble' bond which binds it to the Commonwealth without the permission of its fellow members, and this is equally unlikely to be forthcoming.

Eventually some solution will be found to those constitutional problems, for Australia is essentially a unit, and though separation may have triumphed at the moment, both external and internal forces will produce greater centralisation. Her other problem is more difficult.

Australia has been caught in the tide of economic nationalism, partly as an attempt to mitigate the revolution which is taking place in her economic life, and partly to protect herself against any reduction of her standard of living due to competition from countries with a lower standard than hers. This last is her greatest dread. Australia has produced a life for her citizens which is freer and has a higher material level than that of most other democratic countries. On this foundation she hopes to build a safe, healthy and happy nation, freed of the dangers and jealousies which exist in the older world. Her outlook is not dissimilar from that of the United States, for like the men and women of America, Australians, too, have their dream.



## CHAPTER XV

### SOUTH AFRICA

O! ek was so bang  
Dat die Khakies my sou vang  
En ver oor die see sou stuur.  
So vlug ek na die kant,  
Van die Oppington, se sand  
Daar onder by die Groot rivier.

(O! I was so scared  
That the Khakies whom I feared  
Would banish me across the sea.  
So to Uppington I fled,  
Where the sands are rich and red,  
And the Orange River flows—so free!)

Dutch Song : Sarie Marais

THE history of the government of South Africa, between 1806 when Cape Colony was taken over from Holland, and 1910 when the four colonies were joined in the Union, was, as Mr Churchill has said, a "long concatenation of fatal mistakes". A racial problem, similar to that of Canada, was complicated by the presence of a huge native population towards whom the English and Dutch had entirely different policies. The former, nourished by the principles of nineteenth-century humanitarianism, insisted upon treating Kaffir and Hottentot as equals, while the latter looked upon the native as an instrument provided by God to enable His chosen people to live comfortably in the land which He had given them. That both were wrong is probably the verdict of history, but this fundamental difference in attitude has been fertile of trouble to the present day.

A different outlook on the native question, too, existed between those who lived in the security of the Cape and those who dwelt on the frontier. On remote farms in the interior, where men were ever ready for the coming of the fighting regiments of the Bantu tribes, the sentiments of the emissaries of the London Missionary Society were scarcely understood. To them the natives were at their worst wild marauders, and at their best rather feeble weapons to be used by the settler in his grim struggle against nature. This attitude was to be found among all those who lived on the frontier, whether they were Dutch on the banks of the Vaal, or English who had come in 1820 to settle at Port Elizabeth. The Cape native franchise which has recently been amended is a relic of this difference. It was the failure to realise the existence of these frontier problems which was also at the root of much of the trouble.

Besides this, the attitude of the British public at home had all the intolerance of ignorance. Fanned by the lurid stories of Boer cruelty to natives which issued from Exeter Hall, the headquarters of the London Missionary Society, public and politicians assumed an attitude of contempt for the whole of the Dutch farming community. Thus, after one of the small wars against the marauding Kaffir tribes, Lord Glenelg, then Colonial Secretary, wrote that he considered that the Kaffir nation had ample justification for trying to revenge themselves against the colonists in view of the systematic injustice of which they had been victims. In vain Governors like Sir Ben D'Urban and Sir Harry Smith tried to persuade the authorities at home, that there was another and stronger side to the case.

The emancipation of slaves, proclaimed throughout the

Empire in 1833, brought this ill-feeling to a head among the Boers, not on account of the principle which lay behind it, but of the way in which it was carried out. The inadequacy of the compensation, and the fact that it could only be obtained in London, gave rise to great hardship in the colony. About the same time steps were taken in Cape Colony to anglicise the legal system and to strengthen the powers of the Governor. Partly as a result of these things and partly because the lonely life on the veldt appealed to them, thousands of farmers with their families trekked north into the unknown, "with the assurance that the English Government had nothing to require of them, and that they would be allowed to govern themselves without its interference in the future".

Until 1836, when the Great Trek took place, there had only been one civilised government south of the Vaal River, and the establishment by these voortrekkers of a number of small loose states brought a new factor into South African politics. From that time on, the Imperial Government was forced to undertake wider responsibilities in the interior: first, for strategic reasons, because warrior tribes in the hinterland—Kaffirs, Zulus, Basutos, and Matabele—driven southwards by the constant pressure of tribes farther north, threatened with massacre the white settlements inland from the coast; secondly, for reasons of a no less urgent, if perhaps less honourable kind, when diamonds and gold were discovered and the native territories in the interior gave promise of great resources.

This expansion was undertaken with great misgivings, for one of the strangest of the characteristics of British rule in South Africa is the reluctance shown by most governments at home to increase their responsibilities in that continent. The complex which made Mr Gladstone

hesitate before dispatching an armed expedition to relieve General Gordon, was the same as the one which caused the Committee of the Privy Council for Trade and Plantations to affirm that further expansion in South Africa would be "costly, inglorious, unprofitable, and sanguinary". The frontier receded northwards, not under pressure of imperial troops on punitive expeditions, but in the face of traders and missionaries seeking greater scope for their several occupations.

In 1842 Natal was annexed chiefly on account of the great importance of the port of Durban, and six years later British sovereignty was proclaimed over the territory between the Orange and the Vaal rivers. No sooner had this latter step been taken than the Imperial Government regretted it. Defeatism was then at its height, and as a result, by the Sand River Convention, 1852, and the Bloemfontein Convention, 1854, respectively, the South African Republic in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State were recognised as independent states.

. . . . .

Under the early governors, Cape Colony had been ruled autocratically, but in 1854 a new Constitution was set up which provided for a parliament consisting of two chambers—a council containing fifteen elected members and a house of assembly containing seventy-nine members, all elected. The parliament had the right to legislate on certain subjects. The Executive Council was to be composed of officials sent out from England, and it was on the advice of this body that the Governor acted. This Constitution lasted until 1872, when full responsible government was given to the Cape. The reason why South Africa was so late in reaching this stage of political

development was because the colonists were afraid that the British Government might withdraw the imperial troops and leave them undefended. As a matter of fact the last English soldier did not sail from South Africa until 1921.

The grant of independence to the Orange Free State in 1854 was made largely against the wishes of its inhabitants, and it was not long before a movement started to re-unite the colonies and republics of South Africa in some sort of federation. Sir George Grey (Governor 1854-61) wrote in one of his dispatches that "by a federal Union alone, the South African Colonies can be made so strong and so united in policy and action, that they can support themselves against the native tribes". A year later the Orange River Peoples' Council passed a resolution to the effect that "Union or alliance with Cape Colony, whether on a basis of federation or otherwise, is desirable". The only immediate result of this was that Grey was recalled as a 'dangerous man' likely to imperil the policy of Her Majesty's Government in South Africa.

After this setback, little was heard of federation for a decade. In 1872 another Governor, Sir Henry Barkly, again spoke of "establishing a system of a federal union, in which all the provinces of South Africa shall be sooner or later embraced". The scheme, he thought, promised to be of immense value. Uniformity would be given to legislation, ruinous tariffs abolished, the construction of railways simplified, and, finally, a consistent, and it was hoped, far-sighted native policy embarked upon.

The British Colonial Secretary, Lord Carnarvon, who had in 1867 successfully brought about the federation of Canada was ambitious to repeat his triumph in South Africa. He sent Mr Froude, the historian, to sound opinion

in the Cape, and even had a Bill drawn up on the lines of the British North America Act, which he dispatched to the Colony for consideration. The moment, however, was unpropitious. The Transvaal was in the middle of a war with the rising power of the Zulu chief Cetewayo, and was itself on the verge of anarchy. The Orange Free State was frightened at the prospect of any increase of British influence, and the Cape Colony, with its newly acquired responsible government, was scarcely in a position to take any further step.

The reason for the Orange Free State's reluctance to fall in with any idea of federation at that moment, was due partly to the action taken by the British in 1871 over the ownership of the Kimberley diamond fields, following the decision of Governor Keate of Natal, who had been called in to arbitrate. Legally and morally the Boers' case was unassailable and the British action in assuming possession of the mines, was indefensible.

The situation in the Transvaal between 1871 and 1877 went from bad to worse. The breakdown of the government and the menacing strength of the Zulu tribes were considered a threat to the British Colonies. In March 1877, therefore, Sir Bartle Frere, the Governor of the Cape, proclaimed the annexation of the South African Republic. The real reason for this action was to hurry up the scheme of confederation, which most people agreed was essential if the white settlements were to be secure and to prosper in South Africa. As on so many other occasions in the history of the relations between Dutch and British, the idea was right, but the method of bringing it about was faulty. From the unrest which it caused resulted the first Boer War. The Liberal Party, which had recently been returned to power, and whose leader, Mr Gladstone, had

himself referred to the annexation as "an invasion of a free people", was only too glad to slough off any new responsibility abroad. After a series of minor disasters to British troops, which culminated in the defeat at Majuba Hill, it was agreed in 1881 to allow the South African Republic to go once more free under the nominal suzerainty of Great Britain.

It was shortly after Keate's award that there arrived amid the hustle of the diamond fields a boy of nineteen just out from England. It is not possible to go at length into the career of Cecil Rhodes. The magic of his name still lingers in the Dominion. His great wealth, his granite-like determination, the ruthless methods, which in the end left him discredited, have their own fascination. But to South Africa he bequeathed two things: Rhodesia, which one day will become part of the Union, and the belief that racial bitterness might be quenched, if both peoples were united in a new loyalty to South Africa under the British flag.

It was with this object in view that, shortly after his election to the Cape Parliament in 1880, Rhodes made an alliance with Jan Hofmeyr and the Dutch Afrikaner Bond. It was a result of this that in 1890 he was able to accept the offer of the premiership of the Colony, and his first cabinet included three members of the Bond.

The basis of his whole policy, until the Raid five years later which caused his fall, was the union of Southern Africa on some sort of federal lines, and the establishment of a new loyalty which would take the place of English and Dutch; for it was only in such a union of loyalties that his bright dream of the future of his country and the Empire could ever come true.

This movement in the Cape resulted in a stiffening of

opinion among the ultra-independent party in the Transvaal. To President Kruger and those who thought like him, any interference with the ordinary existence of the people, whether on the part of the foreigners who swarmed into the country after the discovery of gold on the Rand, or by the Imperial Government, was contrary to the will of Providence. His policy was to preserve the purity of race and religion which his fathers had trekked north to maintain. Consequently, he refused any political rights to the Uitlanders or foreigners, and maintained as little intercourse with the imperialists in South Africa or England as was possible.

There is something strangely impressive in President Kruger's unflinching determination to keep out the 'cursed English', even at the cost of a hopeless war.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately for him, the drapings of the Old Testament were not a fit apparel for a state to which wealth had attracted an assortment of the world's toughest customers. The patriarchal polity of the old Transvaal, though sufficient for the simple life of the veldt, had little hope of coping with the turmoil of the gold-fields. Kruger, several years before the Raid, was championing a cause already lost.

It was the clash of these policies which led to the Jameson Raid, and eventually to the Boer War of 1899. The war seemed to be the last stage in the evil destiny which dogged the steps of British rule in South Africa during the nineteenth century. The accumulated results of years of misunderstanding and stupidity, amounting almost to malevolence on the part of British politicians and public on the one side, and the obstinate ill-will of

<sup>1</sup> The war was at first sight not quite so hopeless, for there existed a military agreement between the Transvaal and the German Empire.



the Dutch on the other, was finally wiped out in blood. With the new century came a changed spirit.

At the Treaty of Vereeniging, which ended the war, it was promised that as soon as possible the military administration of the Transvaal and Orange Free State would be replaced by representative institutions, and that eventually self-government would be introduced. As Mr Chamberlain said, these terms were a charter for the Dutch people, and he prophesied that if both sides kept to the spirit of the agreement, they would all be free people under one flag before many years were out.

The first few years of the treaty were spent in reconstruction. An exceedingly efficient Civil Service was built up by Lord Milner with the help of a group of young men known as 'the Kindergarten'.<sup>1</sup> The devastated countryside was rebuilt and repopulated. There were Boer leaders like Botha and Smuts who realised that the future of South Africa lay in their ability to develop their own national character within the Empire. There was a vigorous revival of sane nationalism, such as South Africa had never known before. Botha preached the doctrine that Rhodes and Jan Hofmeyr had taught—only on a basis of conciliation and co-operation between the two races could South Africa thrive. In 1906-7, the reward of his statesmanlike policy came in the shape of self-government for the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Four years later, after months of preliminary negotiation, the four colonies were joined in the Union.

The immediate reason for this step was the fear that a customs war might break out between the colonies, resulting in the stagnation of inter-colonial trade, but

<sup>1</sup> Two of them, Lord Tweedsmuir and Sir Patrick Duncan, are now themselves Governors-General of great Dominions.

behind it all was the ever-present dread of the consequences of disunity in the face of the eternal native problem. Though these factors made it necessary, only the work of men of all races and parties in South Africa made it possible. Lord Selborne, who had succeeded Milner as High Commissioner, had stated plainly in his Memorandum that Union must be the product of the soil of South Africa and not of Downing Street. The South Africa Act, which was passed by the Imperial Parliament in the spring of 1910, was the result of the discussions of members of all parties at a National Convention, which included Jameson of the 'Raid' and Steyn, one-time President of the Orange Free State.

Owing to the comparative similarity of the various colonies, the National Convention chose a union as the form of government, instead of a federation. Local jealousy was allayed by setting up the administration at Pretoria and the legislature in Capetown. The Parliament consists of two houses, a senate which has forty members—eight elected by each province and eight nominated—and a house of assembly which originally had 121 members but which has now 150; 61 represent the Cape Province, 57 the Transvaal, 16 the Orange Free State, and 16 Natal. Practically all legislative power is in the hands of the Union Government. The four provincial councils occupy much the same position as the superior county councils in England. Each is under an Administrator appointed by the Governor-General and deals with provincial finance, education, local works, and municipal institutions. Under the Union Act, both Dutch and English are the official languages, and a knowledge of both is required for all Government services.

Such was the Constitution which the South Africa Act established, and which has lasted with little change to the present time. Its worth was soon tested by the outbreak of the Great War and the rebellion of some of the old Boer War generals, who had not taken easily to the new régime. Not only did the Union prove that it was able to maintain itself at home, but it contributed to the imperial forces elsewhere. The climax was reached when Generals Botha and Smuts set their signatures to the Treaty of Peace at Versailles.

After the death of General Botha in 1919, the leadership of the party which he had created passed to Smuts, and with it a host of problems which had to be faced and solved. Apart from the economic depression, the dry bones of racial bitterness had taken flesh, and the Nationalist Party under Hertzog had been returned at the 1920 election as the biggest single party. In 1921-2 Smuts's difficulties were increased by industrial trouble on the Rand, which ended in a dangerous strike which was only quelled after the use of troops. In the early part of 1924, he decided to appeal to the country. As a result many seats were lost and the Nationalists, in coalition with the Labour Party, took over the government. Not a few people feared that the troubles of an earlier day would be repeated.

From 1924 to 1930 the economic situation in South Africa was most prosperous. As far as the position of the Union in the Commonwealth was concerned, most of General Hertzog's misgivings were laid to rest at the time of his first visit to England for the 1926 Conference. For the present, a republic was out of the question.

In 1927 occurred the dispute over the flag. British

South African opinion in Natal, always tender in respect of any action which might deprive them of the traditional ties with the 'old country', protested vigorously against the Nationalist proposal to eliminate the Union Jack altogether. Finally, a compromise was reached. By 1930 such comparatively minor problems were merged in the greater question of economic collapse.

In March 1932 the situation looked menacing. Certain speeches by General Hertzog had implied that the racialism was to take a more acute form. The country was deeply divided over the policy of the Government in maintaining the gold standard. In Natal, a new movement had arisen which aimed at the safeguarding of the British connection and the secession of that province from the Union. Above all, there was considerable unrest among the natives. It appeared, as General Smuts said, that unless some compromise was effected, white South Africa would be heading for national suicide. Happily there were leaders not unworthy of the occasion. In 1933 an agreement was reached between the Nationalist and the South African Parties, whereby a coalition government was formed with General Hertzog as Prime Minister and General Smuts as Minister of Justice. Old differences were set aside and enmities of a lifetime forgotten. Once again a British democracy had proved itself able to maintain itself in the face of modern conditions. Racial feeling seemed, for the time, to be almost a thing of the past.

The first main task of the new government, besides introducing a programme of relief and reconstruction, was to deal with the native problem. The policy of the various governments since the Union on this question, has shown traces of the conflict between the more liberal ideas of the old imperialism of Cape Province and the harsher attitude

of the frontier, where, as we have seen, the constant dread of a native rising in the early years, led white settlers of both races to follow an uneven policy of repression.

The native problem is one from which no Union government has ever been, or is ever likely to be, entirely free, and its complexity is appalling. For three centuries a white aristocracy has grown up upon a foundation of cheap and plentiful native labour. In doing so it has broken down the old standards of life, which, for all their crudeness, were sufficient to satisfy the aspirations of millions of human beings from time immemorial. It provided the native with new desires—for wealth, education, and all the other amenities of civilisation. The problem is, if and how those desires are to be satisfied without dragging the standards of the white man down to the level of the black.

There are some who advocate complete equality. If South Africa is to remain a *white* Dominion, such a policy is out of the question. Besides, it would do neither section any good: for the white man it means racial extinction, for the black man it offers opportunities of which he is neither capable nor fitted to take advantage. At the other extreme is a policy of complete subjection of the native to the European. But, besides the ethical impropriety of such a project, the doors of consciousness in the native mind have already been opened too wide to admit it within the realms of practical politics.

There is, however, a third alternative—that is, to allow both races, while inhabiting the same land, to follow their own destinies, as independently of each other as circumstances permit. It is this principle of segregation which has been the foundation of the policy of nearly every government since the Union.

It had been begun in Natal as early as 1860 on the

initiative of Sir Theophilus Shepstone, and the policy was continued and expanded by Rhodes in the Cape by his Glen Grey Act in 1894. By this, a large district across the Kei River was set aside for small holdings for natives; a system of local government installed in which they had a share, and an incentive to work, in the form of a small tax on idlers, provided to prevent the native relapsing, as he was all too apt to do, into a state of sensual stagnation.

The policy of segregation was continued after the Union by the Land Act, 1913, which, in practice, caused considerable hardship to the natives by forbidding them to buy land outside the reserves, where there was already insufficient to provide for their existing requirements. The promise made at that time, for the increase of these reserves, has only recently been carried out. In 1920 General Smuts extended the Transkei system of local councils to the whole of the Union, and created a special body to advise the Prime Minister on native affairs. Unhappily at this time new complications arose. White labour in factories and mines, which had grown enormously as a result of the War, was beginning to fear competition from the natives in skilled and semi-skilled employment. The object of most of the trade unions in South Africa, from which all natives are excluded, has always been to protect the white workman from this threat to his standard of living, and it was to maintain this colour bar in the mining industry that the Rand strike broke out in 1922. Two years later, when the Nationalist-Labour Government came into power, a Colour Bar Act was passed forbidding any native to take skilled or semi-skilled employment. In 1925, the Government introduced four Bills which were intended to form

the basis of its native policy. The first, the Representation of Natives Bill, sought to end the franchise of natives in the Cape which had continued from pre-Union days; the second was the Native Council Bill intended to complete Rhodes's and Smuts's policy of local self-government; the third was the Native Lands Amendment Bill, the object of which was to provide the additional territory promised in 1913; and, lastly, the Coloured Persons Rights Bill, to preserve for that section (e.g. non-Bantu natives, of whom there are 500,000) equal political rights with Europeans. Besides this, everything possible was to be done to prevent the natives from moving from the farms into the towns, which had been becoming increasingly common.

The traditional principle which lay behind this policy was to maintain a white South Africa by a more drastic policy of segregation, and especially to preserve the political domination of the European section. In 1930-31, with this same object in view, the Government introduced universal white suffrage, removing all the educational and property qualifications which had previously been necessary.<sup>1</sup> Its native legislation was, however, vigorously opposed, and was eventually referred to a committee, where it remained for some years. In 1935 it emerged in a rather different form in two Bills, one of which was intended to abolish the old Cape native franchise and the other to provide more lands for native settlement.

The latter was accepted on its merits, but the former was attacked by natives all over the Union, who had come to look on the Cape Franchise as a sign that one day they would be accepted as civilised citizens. In deference to

<sup>1</sup> The Cape native voter had to pass strict property and educational tests, with the result that never more than 16,000 at any one time were actually enfranchised.

this opposition, the Bill was eventually altered to allow the Cape native to retain the vote to elect three European members to the House of Assembly, while natives all over the Union were given the right to elect representatives to a special Native Advisory Council, which in time the Government hope will develop into a separate parliament with power to legislate on native affairs.

The second measure, the Native Trust and Land Act, was passed in June 1936. By this the Government were empowered to release certain areas in which the native could buy land. Any European owning property in those areas is to be eventually bought out, and it is intended that 12 per cent of the land of the Union will be devoted to this purpose. A sum of £10,000,000 is to be set aside to be administered by the Government as trustee, and this is to be used to help the native in land purchase.

As a consequence of those two Acts the native will be, as far as possible, segregated politically and economically from the European. How far such a policy can be enforced is difficult to say: probably it is too late now for it to be carried out effectively. It appears almost beyond the powers of man to change the development of a hundred years, and to unravel the tangle of social, political, and economic relationships which have grown up between the two races.

Allied with the colour question is the problem of the 'poor whites'. According to the report of the Carnegie Commission, 1931, the standard of living of 17.5 per cent of the white population is 'very low', e.g. not much above that of the native. This fact stands as a perpetual warning of the dangers surrounding white civilisation in South Africa, which will always have to face the competition of native labour. For the most part the poor white comes



from the depressed rural class, which has been gradually driven from the land, and which has failed to adjust itself to urban conditions.

Uneducated, unskilled, and in very many cases both mentally and physically below the average, the poor white has had to compete with the native in manual labour, usually without much success. As a result, he has fallen back on public relief and drifted aimlessly and hopelessly from district to district—a burden to the community and to himself. His initiative, never very great, has been further enfeebled by being told by politicians that, as a member of the white aristocracy, the Government must always contribute to his support and keep at least his head above the black ocean on which he floats. Attempts have recently been made to resettle this section on the land, and the Government has recruited a number of them for the railways, but the core of the problem remains untouched and looks like continuing to be so.

Shortly after the first session of the Coalition Parliament met in January 1934, Generals Smuts and Hertzog decided to unite their followers in one party. The scheme was unanimously accepted by the South African Party and with only a small dissentient minority by the Nationalists. This latter was led by Dr D. F. Malan, who had been a member of the pre-1933 Cabinet and who took up the attitude that such a fusion would be a betrayal of Afrikanerism. It soon became clear that he intended to assume the mantle which had fallen from Hertzog's shoulders as the leader of Dutch racialism in the Union. South Africans could not help remembering that twenty-five years before, General Hertzog had set out to build the Nationalist Party with a mere handful of followers, that

he had appealed to racialism and republicanism and had bitterly attacked the Imperial connection, and that he had come in the end to rule South Africa. There was every chance that Dr Malan might accomplish the same thing.

His first action was to unfurl once again the weather-beaten banner of republicanism, which the crisis had momentarily set aside. The slogan which he adopted was: "A Republic, but not necessarily in our time", and this was perhaps just as well, for Dr Malan is over sixty. He then attacked General Hertzog most bitterly for his betrayal of Afrikanerism and, as evidence of the fact that the old ghost of racialism was not laid, began to gain considerable support in Cape Province, as well as in the traditional stronghold of Dutch nationalism, the Orange Free State. The only occasion on which any test of the state of political feeling in the Union since 1933 has been made, was at the provincial elections in 1936, when the United South African Party was returned everywhere with large majorities. At the same time the increase of the votes cast for Dr Malan's candidates is an indication of the growing strength of his party. There is little doubt that this will be transmuted into a more numerous and more powerful Nationalist opposition, when the next general election for the Union Parliament takes place in 1938.

Besides the enactment of the native code, the other most considerable achievement of the Fusion ministry in internal affairs, was the passing of the Status of the Union Act in 1934. The object of this Act was to regularise the constitutional status of South Africa, in accordance with the principles set out in the Balfour Report and enacted by the Statute of Westminster. Such a measure had long

been advocated by General Hertzog, and its non-revolutionary nature is shown by the fact that all the South African Party members of the Cabinet were unanimous in its support. General Smuts in the House of Assembly said:

"This is the sort of solution that if . . . I were a dictator, I would dictate. . . . We had two roots of bitterness in the past; one root was racial and the other was constitutional. The racial root is withered . . . let us cut the other root too."

The immediate political object of the Act, was to remove the last vestiges of disagreement from the two parties supporting the Government. Its constitutional effect was to declare that the "Parliament of the Union was the sovereign legislative power in and over the Union and that no Act passed by the Imperial Parliament shall apply to the Union without being first extended thereto by an Act of the Parliament of the Union".<sup>1</sup> The Governor's power of reservation was abolished, and the term 'Union national' substituted for 'British citizen' in certain sections of the South Africa Act. These last two provisions had in practice little or no effect, for the power of reservation had scarcely ever been used, and change of the nomenclature of citizenship was merely a technical detail, which deprived no British subject of any privilege which he had enjoyed before.

One result of the passing of the Act, was that a small section of General Smuts's supporters, under Colonel Stallard, broke away from the main body as a protest against a measure which they considered to be another

<sup>1</sup> *The Round Table*, June 1934.

step towards the separation of the Union from the Commonwealth. This group, which now calls itself the Dominion Party, has only made headway in Natal and on the Rand, and is unlikely in the meantime to form anything more than a small minority party in the Legislative Assembly.

With the abandonment of the gold standard in December 1932, the end of a prolonged drought in 1934 which did much to relieve the depression in agriculture, and with the price of gold rising rapidly to unheard-of heights, South Africa had, by the end of 1934, got well clear of the crisis. The feverish speculation and mushroom fortunes, which characterised the boom on the Rand, almost paralleled the early days of the gold-fields, when men were reputed to have lighted cigars with £5 notes, and actresses to have taken daily immersions in baths of champagne. The value of gold produced in the Union rose from £45 millions in 1930 to £72 millions in 1934, and as a quarter of the entire revenue of South Africa comes from a tax on gold-mining profits, it is not unnatural that the Union Budget has shown an annual surplus, amounting in 1936 to about three million pounds.

The future of the Union, both with regard to its internal politics and to its relations with the Commonwealth and the world, is more interesting, perhaps, than that of any Dominion. The fact that Germany's colonial ambitions are directed principally towards its one-time possessions in Africa brings the Union into the orbit of European foreign policy. At the same time, it makes any scheme of secession from the Commonwealth a little academic, for, while at the moment South Africans can afford to laugh at the protests and threats of the German Government, they would be in a very different position if the

strength of Great Britain was not somewhere in the background.

With the fading of the secessionist movement, racialism may become less of a political force. The place of the Afrikaner country party may quite well be taken by an urban labour party. At present, racial consciousness among the Afrikaner voters, who have lately gone from the country to the towns, is greater than their class consciousness; but this may not remain so for ever, and the time may arrive when the Nationalist opposition of to-day, becomes a socialist trade union party like that in Great Britain.

There is one other possible development in South African politics which deserves mention, and that is the growth of a National Socialist movement on the German model. The circumstances are not unfavourable. There are many South Africans of German origin and that extreme anti-Semitism exists in the Union was shown during the agitation against the entry of German Jewish refugees in 1936. The 'poor whites', too, would form fertile breeding ground for Nazi propaganda, especially if there was another economic depression. Moreover, the present Minister of Defence, Mr Pirow, who has been responsible for the creation of very Germanic organisation for unemployed youths,<sup>1</sup> is credited with ambitions to emulate the achievements of Herr Hitler. Lastly, the racial theories of National Socialism make an especial appeal to the Afrikaner section of the population, steeped in the idea that they are the Chosen People and that South Africa is God's own country.

This is no place for political crystal-gazing. The Union has had a stormy history in the past and there is no reason

<sup>1</sup> The Special Service Battalions.

to suppose that its history will be tranquil in the future. The ancient problem of colour remains unsolved and perhaps insoluble: the desires of European powers in Africa are not yet sated: an economic prosperity, based on the gold mines, must be acutely sensitive to the developments of international finance. But if its problems are great, its achievements are no less splendid. A nation has been created out of two hostile races; the partnership of the Commonwealth has been accepted; and whatever the future may hold, the existence of the Union of South Africa will remain an enduring monument to the success of British imperialism and of the Commonwealth Ideal.

## CHAPTER XVI

### NEW ZEALAND

Peaks piercing the silence of heaven.  
Snows gleaming in luminous space,  
See her waves round a hemisphere driven  
Fling their crests to the winds as they race;  
And the stars watch her lamp newly lighted  
And its beams shot afar o'er the sea  
With a light of old wrongs at length righted  
By men who are free.

W. P. REEVES, *New Zealand*

**B**BRITISH dominion in New Zealand, as in so many other cases, was the result of the enterprise of a trading company. Though Cook had proclaimed it a possession of the British Crown in 1769, no immediate steps were taken to occupy or administer it. Instead, it became the resort of the flotsam and jetsam of the South Seas, whalers, escaped criminals, broken sailors, traders in the less desirable of European goods, who found there such a haven, as the Caribbean Islands had provided for the seventeenth-century desperadoes of the Spanish Main.

To this land in 1830 came the missionaries, of whom the most remarkable was Samuel Marsden. They were concerned for the welfare of the Maoris, who were slowly coming under the influence of the white settlers. Marsden and his companions were anxious to build a Christian native kingdom from which the European colonists would be excluded, and they struggled against the white population already scattered over the country, and carried

on their warfare even in London, where the Church Missionary Society did its best to prevent any attempt to encourage colonisation in New Zealand. At the same time, in spite of the fact that New Zealand had been placed under the jurisdiction of the Governor of New South Wales, the missionaries were unable to control the activities of the less reputable section of the European community, and between 1830 and 1840 the unhappy country was by way of being uncomfortably suspended between the missionaries' heaven and the traders' hell.

While the Government at home hesitated in the face of the clamour of the anti-expansionists, Gibbon Wakefield, white-hot with enthusiasm over his plan for systematic colonisation, conceived the idea of using New Zealand as a giant laboratory. In 1837, owing to his efforts, the New Zealand Association was founded with the object of settling large numbers of emigrants in the country, and in 1842 Wellington was established as the company's capital settlement. Two years before, however, stirred into activity by the formation of a French concern whose object was to annex New Zealand to the French crown, the Imperial Government eventually decided to send a governor and to take over the whole country. Once again, with traditional reluctance, another possession was added to the Empire.

The early years were anything but happy. The difficulties of land purchase owing to the vagueness of Maori law, the increasing hostility of the natives and the jealousy between the company and the imperial officials, produced a state of chaos. It was not until the appointment of Sir George Grey as Governor in 1845, that some sort of order was restored. Grey, then at the height of his career, worked a miracle: the system of the sale of land was



reorganised, the restless tribes were pacified, and a Constitution established which, by 1856, had all the characteristics of responsible government at that time being developed in Canada.

Owing to the wide diffusion of the settlements, the absence of communications, and the intense localism which existed, the country was divided into six provinces, each controlled by a Supervisor and a council of nine elected members. The subjects on which these had a right to legislate were restricted, and the Governor had the power to disallow any Bill passed by them. Over these local bodies was the General Assembly, consisting of a Legislative Council nominated for life and a House of Representatives elected on a franchise subject to certain property qualifications. These were sufficiently high to restrict the number of Maori voters, who had otherwise equal voting powers with the white colonists. This Constitution has developed along lines similar to those of the other Dominions, the chief changes being the abolition of the Provincial Councils, the reduction of the tenure of members of the Legislative Council, of which there are thirty-nine, to seven years, and the extension of the duration of Parliament in 1934 from three years to four. The House of Representatives has now eighty members elected by universal adult suffrage. The Maoris, voting in four electoral districts, are represented by four Maori members.

Grey left the colony in 1853 apparently on the high road to prosperity. Apart from the ordinary stream of immigrants who came out from the Mother Country, a large body of settlers were brought out under schemes sponsored by the Established Presbyterian Church and the Church of England. The hunger for land on the part

of the new immigrants and the incapacity of Grey's successors, whose task was made all the more difficult by inexperience of their ministers after the introduction of responsible government in 1856, soon undid all the good work which Grey had accomplished.

From 1860 to 1870 war was epidemic in the colony between the Maoris and the settlers. At the root of the trouble was the question of land. By the Treaty of Waitangi, 1840, the sovereignty of the British Crown had been acknowledged by the chiefs of the 'United Tribes of New Zealand', and in return the Government had confirmed them in the possession of their lands, unless they were willing to sell them, in which case the Government had the right of pre-emption. On the other hand, the settlers, whether they had come out under the auspices of the company or on their own, wanted land. Grey had succeeded in satisfying both parties, but the governors who came after him failed to carry on his wise policy.

The principal feature of the Maori wars was the incapacity of the imperial higher command. Although the fighting never became extensive and the total Maoris killed during those ten years was only three thousand, the long-drawn-out struggle aroused lasting bitterness. The Maoris had been provided with an adequate supply of fire-arms by unscrupulous traders, and the struggle now gutted, now flared up into such cults as the Hau-Hau movement—a barbaric version of a fanatical Christianity.

During this period, the attitude of the Imperial Government and the policy of the New Zealand ministers caused constant friction. The former, urged on by the missionary societies at home, insisted that while they provided the ten thousand soldiers with whom the war was being prosecuted, they should have control over native policy. The latter,

concerned for the future of European settlement, were determined that it should be in their own hands. The ill-feeling thus generated produced the wild suggestion, similar to the one in Canada twenty years before, that the colony should break away from the Mother Country and join the United States. Happily, with the termination of the war, friction ceased and the scheme was forgotten.

In the meantime, even the return of Sir George Grey to New Zealand in 1861 failed to bring about a solution. Grey, by nature an autocrat, better at dealing with emergencies than with men, found it difficult to work with the new ministers whom the new régime provided for him. In spite of a brave capture of *Woraroa pa* in 1865, obtained without loss to either side, he was unable to end the war, and in 1866 as a result of unfounded accusations levelled against him by the jealous military authorities, he resigned, and New Zealand was deprived of the guidance of a great colonial civil servant, who throughout his own career held her most in his affection. Grey is typical of many another British proconsul, who has found himself left unsupported by those who should have been the first to do so, and the tribute contained in the farewell message from the New Zealand Executive Council applies to a host of others, who have been sacrificed to ignorance and jealousy at home. "We cannot", it said, "but regard it as indicative of the indifference, if not positive disfavour with which the colonies of the Empire are regarded when loyalty, zeal, and high intelligence are passed by without even the courtesy of a cold acknowledgment."

From 1870, after the wars had eventually petered out and the friction which the presence of imperial troops caused had been removed, concurrently with the first great burst of imperialism in the Mother Country, came

the beginning of a new era for New Zealand. From that year until the start of the Great War, the history of the country is one of steady growth, of social progress, and almost uninterrupted harmony in outlook with Great Britain.

The six years after the end of the Maori wars saw a rapid period of expansion, mainly due to the financial policy of Sir Julius Vogel. £10,000,000 were borrowed and spent on railways, roadways, and public works. The discovery of gold in 1856 and again in 1864 attracted numbers of immigrants to the South Island, which had been untouched by the war. The gold towns collected round them flourishing agricultural communities. As early as 1843 sheep ranching had been begun, and between 1851 and 1870 the head of sheep grazed rose from 250,000 to 10,000,000. The only obstacle to this development was the opposition of the provinces, whose powers were necessarily interfered with in the prosecution of Vogel's policy of expansion. In 1875 the conflict reached a climax and the next year the provincial system was abolished. Its place was taken by county councils completely subordinated to the General Assembly.

The wave of prosperity which resulted from these years of open-handed expenditure and heady speculation lasted until 1879 and after that followed fifteen years of depression and digestion. Immigration almost stopped, prices slid slowly downwards, there was unemployment and labour troubles. On the whole, however, they were valuable years and the Government, which was almost continuously Conservative, following a policy of cautious economy, gave the country time to recover from a period of hectic and rather disorderly progress.

In 1891 the Liberal Party was returned to power at

a time when economic conditions were beginning to improve. The three men who led this ministry—John Ballance (1891-3) Richard Seddon (1893-1906), and W. P. Reeves—were responsible for some innovations in the realms of social and labour legislation which startled the world, at that time just emerging from the hypnotic effects of a long period of *laissez-faire*. Ballance, quiet, tactful, competent, has been likened to Campbell-Bannerman; Seddon, one time Lancashire working-lad, gold miner and engineer, whose imperialism had a robustness which fascinated those at home, was by contrast a demagogue in the best sense of the word, forceful, stout-hearted, and eloquent; and Reeves, who drew up the greater part of the labour code for which the ministry was responsible, combined brilliant political ability with an academic outlook not often found even to-day in Dominion public life.

The labour legislation, which was considered by contemporaries as being dangerously socialistic and which to-day would be looked on as an essential part of any industrial order, consisted among other things of a national Arbitration Court, on which were represented workers and employers under the presidency of a Supreme Court judge, for the settlement of all disputes; a system of old-age pensions; a State insurance institution; control over hours of work and conditions of labour, and the introduction of a Workmen's Compensation Act. The principle behind this legislation was "equity, not equality, so as to protect not only the workman but the just employer".<sup>1</sup>

As a counterpart to this, a new land settlement policy was introduced by McKenzie, the Minister of Lands, which aimed at breaking up the great land monopolies and establishing smallholders in their place. At that

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Beaglehole: *New Zealand, A Short History*, p. 67.

time some ten million acres were in the hands of six hundred people. With this object in view, therefore, the Government proceeded to buy compulsorily certain large estates. These were divided into a number of small farms which might be leased from the Government on favourable terms. Later, to further the growth of small holdings, a new tax was introduced, so graduated as to leave the tenant farmer practically free. As a result of this policy, twenty-five thousand smallholders were settled on the Government estates in the space of some twenty years. In 1912, by the Land Amendment Act, the Reform or Conservative Government, which had been returned to power in that year, introduced a scheme for turning the leaseholds into freeholds, and this was done in the case of thirteen thousand holdings. The reason for this step was that the leaseholders were not sharing in the land boom which was in process just before the War, and that certain of the restrictions imposed by the leases were irksome to the tenants. Moreover, private ownership as opposed to State ownership was in accordance with the principles of the old Conservative Party, and therefore more acceptable to its successor, the Reform. At the same time, the latter attempted to rebut the accusation of favouring the big landowners by subjecting them to heavy taxation.

Apart from this activity in internal affairs, New Zealand, under the boisterous leadership of Seddon, took an active part in the promotion of any plan likely to lead to greater imperial unity. His successor, Sir Joseph Ward, proposed a scheme at the 1911 Conference for the federation of the Empire, and the Dominion showed its eagerness to co-operate in matters of defence by introducing compulsory military service and by making an increased contribution to the Navy.

Though the last years of the Radical ministry saw a huge increase in prosperity, it had begun to lose its grip on the country immediately after the death of Seddon in 1906. Under the leadership of Sir Joseph Ward, it succeeded in winning two more elections in 1908 and 1911, but this was due rather to the impetus generated during the earlier years, than to the fact that the public had any real confidence in it. One factor which contributed to the weakening of the Liberal position was the growth of the Labour Party after 1904. Trade unionism had been strong in New Zealand for many years, but previously had found the necessary representation for its interests in the Radical Party. Following the example of the Independent Labour Party in Great Britain, a New Zealand organisation was formed, and at the 1911 election five Labour members were returned. From this small beginning sprang the party which, in 1935, gained a majority over all other parties in the House of Representatives.

In July 1912 the old Conservatives, now renamed for tactical reasons the Reform Party, were returned to power under the leadership of W. F. Massey. The new Prime Minister had begun life as a farm labourer and, after the fashion of Seddon, had eventually come to be the personality behind a great political party. He had all the virtues of his rural training—determination and reliability and patriotism; if he lacked imagination, great events drew him out of the narrow limits of local politics into the wider sphere of world affairs. Such, too, were the characteristics of the Reform ministry during its fifteen years of power. It made no attempt to reverse the developments which had taken place under its Liberal predecessor. Until the years of reconstruction after the

Great War, its policy was merely to steady and consolidate what had already been done.

Its first test came with the outbreak of a dockers' and miners' strike in 1913. This was defeated with the help of the farmers, whose prospects in the British market were threatened by the failure of the ships to sail. The strike, however, dragged on for many months and was scarcely settled when New Zealand found itself involved in the larger calamity of war. The story of the conduct of the New Zealand contingents of the A.N.Z.A.C. finds its place in the history of the world. Cold statistics give some idea of the fighting merit of the troops from the small Dominion. One hundred thousand joined the Colours (the vast majority as volunteers), 50,000 were wounded, 15,000 were killed and only 341 were taken prisoners by the enemy. Besides this, the huge sum of £80 millions was added to the National Debt. The only compensations were the high prices which the farmers received for their primary products, and the broadened outlook of the younger generation of New Zealanders.

In August 1915 a Coalition Government was formed in which Sir Joseph Ward became Minister of Finance, and which brought about a party truce for the duration of the War. Only the tiny Labour Party, now discredited and suspect, remained aloof. The coalition was, however, not a happy one and it broke up immediately after the end of the Peace Conference. At the elections which followed, Ward and the Liberals were badly beaten and Massey returned to sole power once more.

The end of the War left New Zealand with a host of problems similar to those of other countries—industrial unrest and a disordered economic system; a large



number of demobilised soldiers to fit back into civil life; a boom which was soon to burst with inevitable and disastrous effects.

The Government's policy with regard to the returned warriors was to settle them on the land. A large credit fund was set aside, and with it farms were bought. The immediate effect of the introduction of this policy was that the price of land rose rapidly. New Zealanders, accustomed for two decades to rising prices, saw nothing unusual in this. The indebtedness of the New Zealand farmers increased between 1914 and 1923 by 120 per cent. Two years later, however, when prices began to fall, thousands of farmers were ruined and great distress ensued.

As an attempt to salvage the farming industry, the Government introduced between 1922 and 1925 a series of Acts controlling the export and sale of meat, dairy produce, fruit, and kauri gum. The Meat Producers' Board, consisting of representatives of all those bodies interested in the meat trade, on the whole acted far-sightedly and successfully. The Dairy Board, which was set up for purposes more or less similar to the Meat Board, had a less fortunate history. For a short time between 1926 and 1927, it assumed complete control of the shipment and sale of all dairy produce, but for various reasons this proved unsatisfactory, and after 1927 it confined its activities merely to the regulation of the quantity of the exports and to advertising New Zealand produce overseas.

The death of Massey in 1925 brought to an end the long period of the ascendancy of the Reform Party. Under his leadership New Zealand had developed, a little reluctantly perhaps, into a nation. It had passed through a fiery crisis with less hurt than most other

countries. It entered the new stage in its life more thoroughly equipped on account of his wisdom and steadfastness.

Massey's successor, M. J. G. Coates, found himself returned to power in 1925 with a huge majority. Like Ward's Liberals after the death of Seddon, the Reform Party was merely experiencing a false boom. It failed to survive the next election. The most unexpected result of this was that Sir Joseph Ward, once more at the head of a comparatively strong Liberal group—now called the United Party—was returned, like Moses and the tribes of Israel from the wilderness, to power. He was, however, forced to rely on the support of the growing Labourites.

The Liberal revival was comet-like in its brevity. Joseph Ward, the last of the great figures of pre-War Radicalism, was himself a dying man: he had not sufficient strength left to pilot his party through the treacherous waters of minority government. Practically the only legislative achievement of this ministry was the passage of an Unemployment Act. After his death in 1930 his place was taken by G. W. Forbes, who was scarcely installed in office before he found himself faced with the twin problems of falling prices and rising unemployment figures, the postilions of the Great Slump. By the end of 1930 the export trade of the Dominion had decreased by eleven million pounds in nine months and work on four big projects of railway construction had been suspended. The public who, like the United States, had had their fears soothed by promises that prosperity was round the corner, suddenly woke up to the realisation that New Zealand was faced with what Mr Forbes termed bluntly "the greatest crisis in its history".

New Zealand had for many years past indulged in

heavy borrowing. Her indebtedness at the beginning of 1930 was over £250 millions. The payment of the interest on this debt depended upon her ability to sell her exports abroad at a reasonable price. Besides this, her farming industry, upon which her whole economic structure had been raised, was heavily over-capitalised. In recent years agricultural production had become much more efficient and had expanded enormously. Until 1929 this increase had been absorbed by the English market. After that year two developments took place. There was a collapse in the price of primary products, with the result that the return from New Zealand exports was precipitately reduced; secondly, following the new economic policy of the National Government, the British market ceased to expand and actually began to contract. The key to the whole of New Zealand's problems during the years since 1929 has been the attempt to meet the emergency which those developments produced, and the efforts made to reorganise her economic life in the face of tendencies; which she has begun to realise are likely to be permanent.

With a falling revenue and mounting calls on its resources, the United Government was faced with the immediate problem of balancing the budget. It embarked upon a policy of strict economy. A 10 per cent cut was made in all Civil Service salaries, a higher general tariff introduced and taxation heavily increased. This first measure immediately aroused the anger of the Labour Party, upon whom the Government relied for its majority in the House of Assembly. Fortunately the Reformers, realising the gravity of the situation, agreed to help it to pass the necessary emergency legislation.

Apart from the desperate efforts to meet the deficit,

which by the end of 1931 promised to be in the neighbourhood of £8,500,000, the Government was faced with soaring unemployment figures, which in nine months rose from 5,000 to 40,000, and by 1933 reached 75,000. Its policy was to avoid the dole system and to try to provide employment through public works. The difficulty of compiling schemes which were more than merely digging unnecessary holes and filling them in again, was not the least of the ministry's trials, and though much valuable work was done, before many months were out; it found itself compelled to have recourse to the dole.

Perhaps one of the most remarkable and interesting features of those years of depression was the similarity of the ways in which the various democratic systems in the Commonwealth reacted in the face of crisis. In Australia, the United Australia Party, with Mr Lyons, an ex-Labour minister, as leader and Mr Lathan of the Nationalist Party as second-in-command, came into being in April 1931. In Great Britain, the National Government was formed in August 1931. In September the two parties in New Zealand joined in coalition. A few months later the South African and Nationalist Parties in the Union decided upon fusion. In Canada and the Irish Free State rather different circumstances existed. The formation of a Coalition Government in New Zealand with Mr Forbes as Premier, Mr Coates as Leader of the House, and Mr Downie Stewart as Finance Minister, came only after the desperate position of the country had been exposed by a Commission composed of members of all three parties, and as a result of repeated pressure from all responsible sections of society.

Events in New Zealand followed those in Great Britain characteristically even more closely than in any of the

other of the Dominions, for in December 1931 the new Coalition ministry decided to appeal to the country, and there is little doubt that the huge majority obtained by the National Government at home, had a considerable influence on the results of the election, which provided the Forbes-Coates ministry with a comfortable majority of twenty-two.

The story of the four years of Coalition Government is a tale of men trying to grapple with a problem which was too big—perhaps too big for any group of men—to solve. It took the form of a three-headed monster—"the precarious position of the farmer, the position of public finances, and the great and chronic problem of unemployment". Primarily the Government set itself to fill the gap between prices and farming costs on the assumption that the farmers were the hardest hit, and that the loss *in purchasing power would react detrimentally on all branches of the nation's economic life.*

Anticipating Mr Roosevelt, it sought the advice of a committee of university professors, but, unlike him, ignored the advice when tendered. Still intent on doing everything possible to keep the deficit in manageable proportions, it increased the cuts in Civil Service salaries and pensions. It also reduced expenditure on education and the social services, and increased income tax and tariffs. By the Arbitration Amendment Act, 1932, the system of industrial arbitration was modified in order to provide greater flexibility in industrial wage-rates. Previously the Court had made a 10 per cent reduction in all wages, but the Government felt that, in view of the falling prices, wage reductions should be allowed to follow prices on a basis of negotiation between the workers and the employers. With this object the old system was reversed,

conciliation was made compulsory and arbitration optional. Failing the successful efforts at conciliation the previous agreement automatically lapsed. Whatever may have been the arguments in favour of greater flexibility in the conditions of industry, a measure which jettisoned the machinery by which the industrial system of the Dominion had been built in the face of a temporary emergency, seems hardly to have been justified.

At the beginning of 1933 the Government determined on a course of action which led to the resignation of Mr Downie Stewart, and which consisted of raising the exchange to 125 New Zealand pounds to £100 sterling. The object of this was to improve the position of the exporter of New Zealand agricultural products. It also had the effect of increasing the amount of the interest to be paid on foreign loans by 25 per cent, and the slightly questionable financial probity of the action aroused fierce opposition to it in the Dominion. The increase in the burden of interest payments was balanced to some extent by the conversion of the internal debt and the introduction of a Sales Tax.

Mr Coates, who had succeeded Downie Stewart as Finance Minister, and who was the moving influence behind the whole ministry, proceeded farther and farther into the realms of governmental interference, until his supporters began to complain bitterly that his policy was almost indistinguishable from Socialism. Mr Coates, forsaking the usual practice of politicians, sought throughout this long period of legislative activity the advice of economic experts. This brought forth accusations that he was being run by an unofficial 'Brains Trust'—a hidden dictatorship of which he was but the official mouthpiece. Actually such accusations were quite

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unfounded, for Mr Coates was a sufficiently orthodox politician to disregard much of the advice tendered him.

The extent of his activities was, however, imposing. A Reserve Bank was established in 1933; an Agricultural (Emergency Powers) Act, 1934, passed, which gave the Government wide powers over all branches of the agricultural industry; a series of mortgage relief Acts passed, and a mortgage corporation established to provide cheap loans to the hard-pressed farming community. Whatever may have been the criticisms levelled at Mr Coates, he approached courageously and not ineffectively problems which might have evoked from Rousseau the querulous complaint that they could only be solved if men were gods.

In spite of this, when, towards the end of its four-year term, the Government had to face the country in a general election, its chances of re-election were small. It came to the polls trailing clouds of unpopularity accumulated during four years of depression administration. The cuts in salaries and wages, though partly restored, angered many; its currency policy infuriated the banks, its interference in industry had aroused the opposition of industrialists: the country, which had been more mentally depressed by the slump than any other British community, was ready for a change. The Labour Party was careful not to prejudice its chances by wild promises and devotion to theory. As a consequence, it began its first term in office equipped with a substantial majority and the friendly benediction from the *London Times*.

The country as a whole greeted the change with enthusiasm. If the Labour promises of the early arrival of the millennium were taken with a pinch of salt, the

public felt that the glories of the old radical days, when New Zealand led the world in social reform; had returned. The experience and integrity of the Labour Cabinet was appreciatively noticed, as also was the skill of the new Prime Minister, Mr Savage, in allaying the fears of those sections whose interests appeared most threatened by Labour's pre-election programme.

In their election speeches they had promised to "assume control of public credit", and this was partially implemented by purchase of the shares held by private shareholders in the Reserve Bank, thus giving the Government extensive control of currency and credit. The labour legislation of the new ministry was no less vigorous. Industrial arbitration was once more made compulsory, and by the same Act was also introduced the principle of a forty-hour week in all industries, except those in which the employers could show reason why this was impossible. Besides this, the Arbitration Court was empowered to fix a basic wage for all adult workers.

The Government, on coming into power, had made a Christmas present of £250,000 to the unemployed, and shortly afterwards, a new three-year programme of public works at the estimated cost of £17,000,000 was begun. Those who were employed on these schemes were to have the same conditions of labour as those in private employment and at an increased rate of pay.

In ten months the Labour Government passed close on eighty Acts of Parliament, and were rewarded with a comfortable feeling of a task well done, whilst a slightly perplexed public watched with interest the unusual, and to some rather alarming, phenomenon of a Government trying to put its election promises into effect. Perhaps the most significant of its measures has been to guarantee

the prices of agricultural primary products. In February the Government decided to fix the price of wheat and bread, and this was extended to petrol. In the case of the latter, the retailers agreed to heighten the wages paid to workers and to shorten hours of work. The next industry to attract its attention was the dairy industry.

In the Primary Products Marketing Act, the Government has given what amounts to a statement of its political philosophy. The object of the Act is to secure for the dairy farmer "*an Adequate Remuneration for the Services rendered by him to the Community*". Therefore, to prevent fluctuations in prices and "to provide a sufficient net return from his business to enable him to maintain himself and his family in a reasonable state of comfort", the Government in future would buy all the products of the industry at a fixed price based on the average price of the article over a period of years, and having regard to such considerations as the costs of efficient production and "the standard of living of persons engaged in the industry".<sup>1</sup>

In August 1936, the Government acquired ownership of all the dairy produce, and became responsible for its marketing in Great Britain and elsewhere, paying the producer the guaranteed price. This has resulted in a loss for the Government, which must eventually be met out of taxation, unless a rise in the market price in excess of the fixed price gives the Government's Dairy Industry Account a surplus to meet this deficit. The danger of a fixed price is considerable, for no adequate allowance can be made for a sudden rise in the cost of production, and any fall in price will either compel the Government to provide a large subsidy out of taxation, or, if it tries to lower the

<sup>1</sup> *Recent Economic Changes in New Zealand*, Sutch, p. 116.

fixed price to correspond to the fall in the market price, will coat its scheme with a thick layer of unpopularity.

. . . . .

For the second time in its history, New Zealand has taken a flight into the realms of advanced economic experiment. The Government has taken upon itself to interfere extensively in the activities of the individual, and this has drawn from its opponents accusations of 'Fascism' and 'Socialism' in almost equal volume. The real power behind the Labour Party, Mr Walter Nash, is, however, nothing more extreme than a Baldwinian Tory in an overseas mould, and the tendency of the Labour legislation has been rather to stabilise and protect private profit than to abolish or restrict it. Its attempt to build up a planned economy has so far met with success, but the eventual effects of this policy have not been estimated, and no one can yet say whether it has been because of, or in spite of, their activities, that during the first eighteen months of their tenure of office, New Zealand emerged from depression into boom. As far as its relations with the Commonwealth are concerned, New Zealand, whether under Labour or National ministry,<sup>1</sup> remains more jealous of its connection with the Mother Country than any other Dominion, and more willing, whether in questions of defence or foreign policy, to co-operate with her. Shut off from the rest of the world by the splendid barrier of the ocean, New Zealand will be forced for all her Englishry to develop her own independent nationhood: institutions and ideas will develop their local characteristics, and the social experiments which are being tried

<sup>1</sup> The new title of the combined Reform and United Parties, which was formed under the leadership of Adam Hamilton, the ex-Minister of Communications, in October 1936.

to-day, whether they fail or succeed, will leave a permanent mark on New Zealand life. In its place, however, is arising the same loyalty to the Imperial Commonwealth as has been developing in every Dominion since the end of the War.

## CHAPTER XVII

### IRISH FREE STATE

On our side is Erin and Virtue,  
On theirs is the Saxon and Guilt.

ELECTION SLOGAN

**M**R DE VALERA invariably finds it necessary to start any discussion of the Irish situation at a point somewhere in the early Middle Ages: for our purpose, however, we need go no farther back than the beginning of the nineteenth century.

No one during that time ever thought of Ireland as forming part of the colonial problem. Certainly, few people ever suspected that she would eventually follow the same steps as Canada. Victorian England never really attempted to understand the Irishman's point of view. Until after the Great War, no government had had a fair, sympathetic policy towards that country, since Charles I and Strafford exercised a benevolent despotism over it. Mr Gladstone's celebrated Home Rule Bills of 1886 and 1892 were displays of weakness rather than signs of strength. The Conservatives maintained a policy of repression, usually in the name of a loud-mouthed and misguided patriotism. Even Mr Disraeli, who in his younger days had shown a rare grasp of the issues at stake, allowed himself to be swayed by popular ignorance into the arms of reaction. On the one side is a catalogue of industries ruined for the benefit of English manufacturers, of chronic absenteeism, of religious intolerance,

and, what is even worse, a general lack of sympathy and understanding; on the other is the list of the crimes of the Land League and Sinn Fein, the implacable bitterness of Irish-American opinion, and the irritating inconsequence of the Irish themselves.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Ireland might have been saved from the fate which was in store for her. If the Union of 1800 had been immediately followed by the emancipation of the Catholics, the rift between the two religions might never have occurred. Once Grattan's United Ireland Party had given way to O'Connell's Catholic Association, and the Orange Lodges had been founded, religious passions could be relied on to keep aflame grievances which might otherwise have been remedied. The miseries of a Catholic proletariat found an outlet in acts of terrorism against Protestant landlords. Economic reforms which should have been introduced were withheld because they all too frequently appeared to Protestant legislators to be concessions to Catholic violence. The spread of the latter increased the stubbornness of the former, until the position became one of almost inescapable deadlock.

The Union between the two countries worked evilly for both. Political life in England was unnecessarily embittered by the struggle for Home Rule. Again, if the presence of the Irish members in the House of Commons sharpened the wits of the English M.P.s, it was but poor recompense for the damage to essential domestic legislation, which their obstructive tactics frequently caused. At the same time they did little to make the Irish point of view better understood in the rest of Great Britain, and their methods of drawing attention to their wrongs merely

alienated people who might otherwise have been their sympathisers.

The movement for Home Rule became prominent first under O'Connell in 1841. It declined during and after the Great Famine 1846-7, when men were more interested in maintaining life itself than in indulging in political agitation. It was not until 1865 that it reappeared in the form of Fenianism.

This movement, which aimed at a republic rather than Home Rule, originated in the United States among embittered Irish emigrants, who used the prosperity which they had found in their adopted country to revenge themselves on the Saxon who, so they believed, had wilfully driven them from their ancient homes. During 1866 and 1867 a series of exceedingly far-fetched plots were unearthed by the police and a number of crimes of violence committed by the Fenians. Mr Disraeli's Government was not in the position at that time to deal effectively with the problem, and in 1868 he was succeeded by Mr Gladstone, who immediately announced that his mission was to 'pacify Ireland'.

His first action was to disestablish the Anglican Church, and this was followed by a Land Act intended to protect the tenant from the rapacious landlord. The effect of these measures was disappointing. The principal problem remained untouched, as was shown by the formation in 1870 of a 'Home Government Association', from which sprang the Home Rule Party in the House of Commons. Within four years there were sixty members of Parliament pledged to accomplish the repeal of the Union. With the election of Charles Stewart Parnell to the leadership of the party in 1880, the question of Home Rule began to take dominant place in British politics.



Parnell, like Mr de Valera, was half American by descent. It was he who invented the policy of obstruction in the House of Commons, and who founded the Land League in 1879 to fight his enemies in Ireland.

Hip Hip Hurray for Erin's Cause!  
We'll march to blank destruction!  
We recognise no king, nor laws,  
But Parnell and obstruction.

Linked with the Clan-na-Gael organisation in America, Home Rule became almost a world-wide movement. Behind it was the goad of Parnell's genius and the black, bitter hatred which he harboured against England and everything connected with her.

The tactics of the Land League became more extreme as time passed. There was no alternative for the Government but to introduce a Coercion Bill; the Chief Secretary, Mr Foster, in opposition to Mr Gladstone and Mr Chamberlain, considered that any attempt to conciliate the Irish was useless and dangerous. The murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish, Mr Foster's successor, in Phoenix Park, in May 1882, hardened English opinion against any concessions to the Land League, with the result that terrorism by the Irish extremists became worse, and repression by the British Government more severe.

Mr Gladstone, however, was still determined to carry out his mission of pacifying Ireland. On his return to power in 1886 he set about introducing a Bill to set up a separate legislature for Ireland on a basis of restricted responsible government. Unluckily for Mr Gladstone, public opinion was not ready for this policy. When the House of Commons came to vote on it, there was a majority of thirty against it, including ninety-three Liberals.

Mr Gladstone's second attempt to introduce Home Rule during his short tenure of office 1892-4 was little more than a gesture of despair, unacceptable to Irish opinion and undesired by the English. Two years before, Parnell himself had died, borne down by the personal tragedy of his relations with Mrs O'Shea. The Conservative Party, which ruled almost continuously for the last twenty years of the century, acted characteristically. Mr Arthur Balfour, as Chief Secretary (1887-91), followed an unexpectedly strong and consistent policy of coercion, which was continued by his successors. At the same time a series of liberal Land Laws were passed to remedy agrarian abuses. Had this been done sixty years earlier the 'trouble' might have been prevented; in the 1890's, it was much too late.

Although the position of the Irish peasant improved very considerably under this administration, the political troubles continued. The Conservative Party remained steadfastly opposed to anything in the nature of a concession; and it was not until 1912 that the Liberals were again in a position to revive their policy of Home Rule, mainly as the result of the pressure exercised upon them by the Irish Party, now under the leadership of John Redmond, which held the balance in the House of Commons.

Mr Asquith's Home Rule Bill planned to give control over purely Irish questions to the parliament at Dublin; certain subjects only—e.g. the position of the Crown, defence, foreign policy, and the imposition of Customs duties—were to remain in the hands of the Imperial Parliament. It was the avowed intention of the Government to include Ulster in the plan that aroused the chief opposition to the Bill, and two years later brought Ireland

to the verge of civil war. The fear that the sensibilities and interests of the Protestant and industrial North would be harried by a parliament with a majority elected by the Catholic and agricultural South, was at the root of Ulster's opposition. Rather than submit to Mr Asquith's plan, under the leadership of Sir Edward Carson, the North was willing to fight.

The Liberals, taking their cue from the Nationalists whose slogan was 'Ireland a Nation', refused to listen to any proposals for modifying the Bill in Ulster's favour. "We are bound to see it through," said Sir Edward Grey in December 1913. During the whole of that year the organisation of both North and South for the struggle, which appeared imminent, continued feverishly. Gun-running was indulged in on a fantastic scale: one cargo, consisting of 12,000 rifles, was landed in County Down without the Government being able to prevent it. After the resignation of fifty-three officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade at the Curragh, and the refusal of a company of infantry to take part in measures against the Ulster Volunteers, it seemed doubtful whether even the Army could be relied on to enforce the Government's policy. In the summer of 1914 a situation of complete deadlock, not by any means unprecedented in Anglo-Irish relations, had been reached.

This Gordian knot was only cut by the outbreak, a few weeks later, of the Great War. The crisis brought all parties together. Under the influence of John Redmond, Ireland gave loyal and generous support. It seemed then that the quarrel might be forgotten until the crisis was over, but the postponement of Home Rule until the end of the War and the refusal of the Imperial Government to allow Irish regiments to carry their

national colours, or be accompanied to the front by priests, caused restlessness to break out again. A rebellion which flared up on Easter Day, 1916, was put down with great severity. The hands of the whole of the Empire were already too full to take much notice of what had become a subsidiary problem.

The peace which came in 1918, brought no rest to Ireland. A new outbreak of shooting, burning, murders and executions followed. A shadow republic under Mr de Valera was proclaimed and the struggle seemed to have taken a new and more bitter turn.

The British Government replied to the crimes of the 'Irish Republican Army' with their specially enlisted force of 'Black and Tans'. By the beginning of 1921 events seemed to have reached a climax of horror. In May, contact was made with the republican leader through Sir James Craig, by then, after the Government of Ireland Act of 1920, Prime Minister of Ulster. On the first occasion he was conducted to Mr de Valera's presence by gunmen. However, as Mr Churchill says, "At the end of four hours Mr de Valera's recital of Irish grievances had only reached the iniquities of Poynings' Act in the days of Henry VII," and Sir James had to leave with nothing accomplished. Though this first attempt at settlement was a failure, a month later an invitation to the 'President' to meet the Cabinet was accepted. Though these preliminary negotiations came to nothing, leaders less intractable met and held discussions with the British Government. After much historical argument, an understanding was eventually reached.

In December 1921, Articles of Agreement for a treaty were signed by Mr Lloyd George and Mr Austen Chamberlain on behalf of the British Government, and Michael

Collins and Arthur Griffiths on behalf of the Irish people. This treaty contained two principal items: first, it gave Ireland Dominion status similar to that of Canada; secondly, it made provision for the separate government of Ulster, provided that a majority of her population intimated a desire for this within a certain period. The treaty also laid down that government should be carried on in the name of the King, and that an oath of allegiance should be taken by all members of the new Irish Parliament. It gave the British Navy the use of certain naval bases on the coast and limited the size of the Free State Army. Moreover, it guaranteed religious freedom to all citizens whether Catholic or Protestant (Article 16).

Mr Lloyd George, referring to the treaty in the House of Commons, said: "On the Irish side there is one supreme condition, that the Irish people as a nation should be free to work out their own national destinies in their own way. . . . She has accepted allegiance to the Crown, partnership in the same Empire, and subordinated her external relations to the judgment of the same general Council of the Empire as we have. . . . This brings new credit to the Empire and new strength. It brings to our side a valiant comrade."

Mr Griffiths, a few days later, in the Dáil Eireann, said: "We have brought back to Ireland equality with England; equality with all the other nations which form the Commonwealth and an equal voice in the direction of foreign affairs in peace and war"; and later in the same speech: "I ask the people of Ireland and the Irish people everywhere to ratify this treaty, to end the bitter conflict of centuries, to end it for ever, to take away the poison which has been rankling in the two countries and ruining the relationship of good neighbours."

It might have seemed that the troubles at last were over, and that a new and happier era in the history of the country had begun. Unfortunately this was not to be; before many months had passed Michael Collins had been assassinated as a traitor by one of his own countrymen, the courageous Griffiths had died worn out and broken-hearted, and civil war, this time between the extreme republicans and the provisional government set up by the treaty, was again abroad in the land. The latter, under a new and hitherto comparatively unknown man named William Cosgrave, took stern measures. After a short and violent struggle, order was restored and Ireland began her life as a Dominion under a Constitution provided by the Imperial Act of 1922.

The first article of this Act states that Ireland shall be a co-equal member of the community forming the British Commonwealth of Nations. By Article 4, both English and Irish are to be recognised as the official languages of the country. Personal liberty (Article 6), and the inviolability of property (Article 7), freedom of conscience (Article 8), the right of free speech and peaceful assembly (Article 9), as well as trial by jury on all criminal charges, are guaranteed to the individual citizen.

As was laid down in the treaty, the Constitution was very similar to that of Canada. The Crown was to be represented by a Governor-General. The parliament (*Oireachtas*) was to consist of two houses—the *Dáil Éireann*, which has now 138 deputies elected by proportional representation on the basis of one to every 30,000 citizens, and the Senate, which was supposed to contain those who had won the confidence of the nation on account of services rendered to it in the past. In the early days it consisted of thirty Senators, but this was increased to sixty in 1928.

Although outwardly the constitutional structure of the Free State was similar to a Dominion, the recognition in Article 2 of the Constitution Act that all authority was derived from the people of Ireland placed it in a different relationship to Great Britain from that of any other Dominion. The King, too, occupied from the very beginning, a position unique in Commonwealth constitutions. He was always represented by a native-born Governor-General: he was not, as elsewhere, Commander-in-chief of the Army nor was the military oath taken to him: his head never appeared on the stamps or the coins; in fact, the 1922 Constitution, though monarchical in form, was, as far as internal politics were concerned, more republican than anything else. This point is of importance, in view of the alterations which Mr de Valera has seen fit to make as recently as December 1936.

. . . . .

The Cosgrave administration remained in office for just over ten years—a decade devoted to building up a new nation and damping down the smouldering fires of the past. Substantial progress was made both in the political and economic spheres, and Ireland, as we have seen, had already begun to play her proper part in the solemn councils of the Commonwealth. Until 1927 Mr de Valera's Fianna Fail or Republican Party had boycotted the Irish Dáil. But after the election which followed the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins, they consented to swear the oath of allegiance and took their seats as the official opposition.

The swing of the pendulum is a feature of every political system where public opinion rules, and towards

the end of Mr Cosgrave's second period of office it became clear that the Cumann na nGaedheal Party was unlikely to be returned to power after the next election. At the same time, the activities of the extremists of the Irish Republican Army showed signs of reviving. Murders of Civic Guards and persons known to sympathise with Mr Cosgrave became increasingly frequent and went usually unpunished. To combat this threat to public order, the Government introduced a Public Safety Act setting up a military tribunal to deal with political crimes. It seemed that all the old evils were breaking out again, and with the prospect of the return to power of Mr de Valera, the future of the country appeared scarcely cheerful.

Such was the situation when the Dáil was dissolved at the end of 1931.

At the election which followed in February of the next year, the Fianna Fail Party was returned with a small majority. The whole of the Commonwealth watched with curiosity, not unmixed with anxiety, to see what would be the first measures of the new administration, pledged as it was to set up an Irish Republic in the shortest possible time.

On one of the election posters Mr de Valera had been depicted as the 'Famous Illusionist, Oath-swallower, and Escapologist', and the public had been invited to witness his renowned act, which consisted of escaping from the "strait jacket of the Republic". Mr de Valera was not long in giving a performance of what he could really do. Immediately he assumed power, he announced his intention of abolishing the oath and of withholding the land annuities due to the British Government for the payment of interest on certain loans made to Irish farmers. Besides that, he immediately suspended the Public Safety



Act, and thereby removed the ban on the Irish Republican Army and other extremist organisations.

When the British Government sent a note pointing out that these actions would be contrary to the treaty, Mr de Valera replied somewhat airily that "what was an integral part of a treaty made ten years previously under the threat of an immediate and terrible war was not now important". The existence of the oath was a heavier burden than the people of the Irish Free State were able to bear, and the Irish Government, acting within the rights granted to it by the Imperial Parliament itself in the Statute of Westminster, was going to remove it as soon as it was possible.

This announcement caused no little consternation, not only in England, but throughout the Commonwealth. Messages were received by Mr de Valera from the prime ministers of South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, urging him to attempt some sort of conciliation with the British Government. Mr de Valera replied that Ireland was not in the same position as were the other Dominions. She was a mother country herself and had never acknowledged that she owed her status to an Act of the Imperial Parliament.

It is scarcely necessary here to go into the rights and wrongs of the case. From the point of view of the Commonwealth, in the constitutional dispute (as opposed to the economic dispute over annuities) the British Government was representing the whole body of the Dominions and the removal of the oath was a serious matter. On the one hand, it was the infringement of a treaty which governed Ireland's relationship with the Imperial Crown and, on the other, it entailed the removal of the symbol which was the outward and visible sign of the unity of

the Commonwealth. As far as the legal side of the question is concerned we have Professor Keith's opinion that while the Statute of Westminster allowed the Irish Government to alter the Constitution, at the same time it did not permit it to change the provisions of a treaty solemnly entered into by both parties. Moreover, Mr Cosgrave, in a statement contained in a letter sent to Mr Macdonald at the time of the debate on the Statute in the House of Commons, said: "We have reiterated time and again that the treaty can only be altered by consent." On no occasion did Mr de Valera make any attempt to consult the other party to the treaty.

The economic dispute was of a rather different nature. The annuity payments have been made to the Irish Government by the unfortunate farmers whose market in Great Britain has been ruined by tariffs placed on Irish imports to recover the money for the annuities. This, together with the effects of the crisis, had disastrous results on Irish commerce as a whole, which in 1933-4 fell by 50 per cent. Moreover, it has had evil consequences on Anglo-Irish relations. The fact that the quarrel has not been repaired, in spite of the negotiations which have taken place between the two governments on several occasions, has been due partly to the intransigence of Mr de Valera and partly to the ineptitude of Mr Thomas, while he was Dominions Minister. It has caused huge losses to Irish farmers, while at the same time forming a convenient cloak for the new policy of economic self-sufficiency on which the Irish Government immediately embarked. For the tariff war gave them an opportunity to establish and protect new factories to provide the manufactured goods previously imported from Great Britain.

The Bill to abolish the oath was passed by the Dáil in April 1932, but was so drastically amended by the Senate that it was no longer sufficient for Mr de Valera's purpose. In the meantime, at the latter's request, negotiations with the British Government for a settlement of both the economic and constitutional dispute were begun. Like Herr Hitler, Mr de Valera's idea of negotiation is to get everything he wants without making any concessions himself. Needless to say, the attempt at a settlement merely emphasised the completeness of the stalemate. Both sides protested their desire for friendship and co-operation, and simultaneously took further steps to make that co-operation impossible for some time to come.

Under the Constitution, any Bill passed by the Dáil and rejected or amended by the Senate, became law if passed by the Dáil a second time after eighteen months had elapsed, or sixty days after an intervening general election. With the object of placing his Oath Bill on the Statute Book with the greatest possible speed, Mr de Valera obtained a dissolution of the Dáil in January 1933. The character of the election campaign which followed is illustrated by one of the slogans used by the Fianna Fail,<sup>1</sup> Mr de Valera's party :

On our side is Erin and Virtue;  
On theirs is the Saxon and Guilt.

The result of the election was to return Mr de Valera to power with an increased majority and a greater determination to carry out his programme. Within a few days of the meeting of Parliament, the Oath Bill had again been passed by the Dáil, and after being a second time

<sup>1</sup> Meaning 'The Warriors of the Fail'. Cumann na nGaedheal means 'Tribe of Gaels': in 1933 it became the United Ireland Party or Fine Gael.

rejected by the Senate, became law at the end of the allotted time.

The principal effect of this was to make the ultimate ideal of the Government, and indeed of all the parties in the Free State—that of a united Ireland—even more remote than it had ever been before. Any step which appeared likely to lead to the break-away of Ireland from the Commonwealth, was bound to increase the aversion of Ulster to give up her separate status.

After this success, the political developments in Ireland contrived to provide Mr de Valera with a new experience. After having spent so much of his life, now in close contact with the hard ground, now lofted high in the air at the extreme end of the political see-saw, he found himself perched rather uneasily in the centre, trying to maintain a balance between the wilder section of the I.R.A. which had begun to develop communist tendencies and General O'Duffy's<sup>1</sup> new National Guard or Blue Shirts whose political policy showed a definite similarity to the ideology of fascism.

Humour never quite deserts Irish politics even at their grimmest moments, and there was an element of comedy in the reintroduction of the Public Safety Act to deal with those problems, in spite of the fact that the Fianna Fail had attacked Mr Cosgrave for invoking the wide powers, amounting almost to martial law, provided in it. Although this was used chiefly against the National Guard and recalcitrant farmers who refused to pay annuities, the time was to come when Mr de Valera was to find it useful

<sup>1</sup> General O'Duffy, who had been removed from his post as head of the Civic Guard by Mr de Valera at the request of the I.R.A., was elected leader of the Army Comrades' Association, whose object was to protect the freedom of speech and assembly of all moderate parties from the attacks of the I.R.A. The A.C.A. was converted into the National Guard and became eventually an offshoot of Mr Cosgrave's organisation.

in dealing with the I.R.A., whose activities became increasingly subversive.

Though the tariff war with Britain still continued, the Government proceeded with its policy of the gradual alteration of the Constitution to make it more in accord with their republican aims. In 1932 the Governor-General, Mr McNeill, by a series of calculated insults, was forced to resign, and he was succeeded by Mr Donal Buckley, a retired shopkeeper, who was required to do nothing beyond drawing his salary and signing the documents submitted to him by the Executive Council.

The next step was taken in August 1933, when Mr de Valera introduced Bills to abolish the Governor-General's power of reservation and the appeals to the Privy Council; both of which were entirely within his rights after the passing of the Statute of Westminster. The next step was more serious. In March 1934 the Senate showed considerable courage in throwing out a Bill to ban uniforms, which was aimed especially at the Blue Shirts. The Government immediately introduced another Bill to abolish the Senate, which that body not unnaturally had no hesitation in rejecting. The reasons given for the Government's action were, to put it shortly, that the Senate had been used as an ornamental dump for party hacks; but while there was a certain justification for this attitude, the precipitate way in which the Bill was introduced shows that it was due to a spasm of bad temper on Mr de Valera's part.

Belief in the 'inevitability of gradualness' is apparently not confined to Mr Sidney Webb and the Fabian intellectuals, for the slow, almost stealthy demolition of the Constitution set up by the treaty was continued by the passing of the Citizenship Act. According to this, &c

Mr de Valera explained, the old common citizenship between the people of Ireland and those of Great Britain was ended, but at the same time the former retained all the privileges of membership of the Commonwealth of Nations. To this Mr Thomas replied that no law of the Free State could deprive Irishmen of their British status. This was just as well for Mr de Valera, since in 1934 about 23,000 of his countrymen had gone to England and Scotland to find employment, which their own land could not provide. The prospect of having these sent 'back to Erin' as aliens by the British Government, together with all those who had emigrated in other years, was a prospect which even Mr de Valera would hardly dare to face.

As far as Great Britain was concerned, Mr de Valera was boxing a shadow. The British public had lost interest in the so-called struggle; they were tired of the economic war; they were resigned to let Irish politics travel their own way in the hope that, on the principle that "even the weariest river winds somewhere safe to sea", the present impetus of the Fianna Fail policy would eventually slacken, and Ireland would find its constitutional level somewhere still within the broad limits of the Imperial Commonwealth. The Anglo-Irish Trade Agreement<sup>1</sup> of January 1935, which was renewed both in 1936 and 1937 on extended terms, was an evidence of the British attitude and an indication, too, that Mr de Valera's policy had almost run its course.

There was another sign of this change when the Government, during the 1935 Dublin Transport strike, suppressed the I.R.A. newspaper, *Poblacht*, and arrested

<sup>1</sup> This increased the number of cattle to be exported from Ireland to England and gave the latter a virtual monopoly of the Irish coal trade.

some of its leaders. This did not, however, prevent the continuance of the terrorist activities of the I.R.A. braves, who now began to display the same dislike of Mr de Valera as they had shown of Mr Cosgrave. It was not until after the insensate murder of Admiral Somerville in March 1936 that the Government finally burnt its boats. Just as it had declared the Blue Shirts an illegal organisation some time before, in June the I.R.A. was similarly proclaimed and a large number of its leaders were tried and sentenced before the Military Tribunal.

The fact that five years, almost to a day, earlier Mr Cosgrave's Government had done the same thing, tempts the historian to indulge in a commonplace. If a man or group of men represent a large body of extreme opinion in a country and will neither be coerced nor persuaded, then the best plan is to give them power, and let the sobering effects of responsibility do the rest. Henry VII understood this when he said of the suppliant Earl of Kildarc, "If all Ireland cannot rule him, then he must rule all Ireland", and accordingly made him Viceroy on the spot. It seems a tragedy that we have had to wait four hundred years before another British Government showed similar common sense.

Mr de Valera's new attitude was further displayed during the debate on the second passing of the Bill to abolish the Senate in September, when he said that he was in favour of a second chamber, if a satisfactory one could be found. This was a surprising admission in view of the bitter attacks which he had launched against the Senate for the past two years.

He had already announced that he intended to introduce a new Constitution which would be suitable to Irish needs, and he left now no doubt that this would be

bi-cameral. The real problem was whether this would be republican in character, or whether it would be an adaptation of the ordinary constitutional forms existing in the Commonwealth. It seemed less and less likely, however, that the former would be the case. The political evolution of Mr de Valera's policy was drawing to a close and it was scarcely likely that he would take any action which would render the emergence of a United Ireland almost impossible. The form of the new Constitution, according to Government spokesmen, was to be similar to that of 'Document 2', which had contained Mr de Valera's proposals for a settlement in 1921, and which the British Government had then found unacceptable.

The substance of the proposals in the Document was that the connection between Great Britain and Ireland should be external, and that the Crown should be recognised as the symbol of this relationship. But for internal purposes all mention of the King was to be erased from the Constitution, which was to be to all intents and purposes republican with an elected President. This substantially is what was done by the two Bills passed by the Dáil on December 12th 1936, which regularised the abdication of King Edward and the accession of his successor. The effect of these Acts was, on the one hand, to deprive the Governor-General of his remaining functions and to remove all mention of his office from the Constitution, and, on the other, to acknowledge the Crown as the link between the various nation-states of the Commonwealth. Legally, the position has been changed; in practice scarcely anything of importance has been altered. Treaties are to be made and diplomatic representatives still to be appointed in the name of the King. What is significant, however, is that King George has been



*voluntarily* recognised as King of the Imperial Commonwealth and of Ireland, by the men who fought in 1916 and 1921 against Great Britain, as well as by the loyalists to the Crown.

The new Constitution was partly drafted by Mr de Valera personally. It establishes a Parliament of two Chambers; a Senate of sixty elected on a vocational basis with power to delay Bills for three months and to amend legislation passed by the Dáil, though these amendments may be rejected. The Dáil remains the same as before, but all changes in the Constitution must be made by a national referendum. The President of Eire (which is the new name given to Ireland) is to be elected by the people. He holds office for seven years, and is invested with the power of calling and dissolving the Dáil, and carrying out the various functions previously exercised by the Governor-General.<sup>1</sup>

No actual mention of the relations between Ireland and the British Commonwealth is made in the Constitution document, but the preamble contains a passage which gives the Government, in connection with its external relations, the power to adopt any method of procedure used "by the members of any group or league of nations with which Eire is or becomes associated for the purpose of international co-operation in matters of common concern"; this means, in effect, the procedure at present used in the Imperial Commonwealth.

In spite of his insistence that the end of the road to freedom is not yet in sight, Mr de Valera has made a rather pathetic attempt to give finality to Irish political development by making the Constitution apply to the

<sup>1</sup> There is also a Council of State composed of high public officials to advise the President on matters connected with the exercise of his powers.

whole of the country, oblivious of the partition. The fact that the new Constitution heaps a few more rocks upon the mountain of prejudice which separates the North of Ireland from the South, apparently escapes him.<sup>1</sup>

The troubled years it seems, however, are nearly over. Ireland has, after these centuries of unhappiness, at last found her level in the Commonwealth. Two questions remain, the one simple, and the other complex. The dispute with Great Britain may be solved whenever Mr de Valera is willing to open negotiations with his neighbour, but the quarrel with Ulster is a very different matter. It may be that in future the North will find the prospect of union with the Free State less repellent than she does at the moment. If extremism is at an end, if the Fianna Fail have learnt tolerance, perhaps a united Ireland may come into being. At any rate, the present tendency on the part of the Southern Government towards greater moderation, will do more to bring this into the realms of practical politics than anything else. Five years of power have broadened Mr de Valera's mind appreciably; perhaps another term of office will turn him into a statesman.

<sup>1</sup> This Constitution was approved by a referendum in July 1937 by 685,105 votes to 525,945.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE COMMONWEALTH: AN INTER- PRETATION

THE growth of the Imperial Commonwealth is a story of high adventure in which a whole nation has engaged. It is an experiment in political association carried on from the early days of the voyagers right down to the last Imperial Conference. The immensity of the experiment is a common theme of platform and classroom, but no statistics or rhetoric can properly convey the colourful variety of its culture and tradition, or the diversity of its political development. It is an experiment in co-operation in which Great Britain has had the lion's share, but one which could not have succeeded without the help of men of many races and colours.

Unlike the empires of the past, it is not the outcome of the ambitions or megalomania of any individual or dynasty. Our history contains no Alexander or Napoleon. We have never been given to the cult of hero-worship, and though certain names outstand we honour them, not for themselves alone, but for the ideals which they stood for and the unseen thousands whom they represent. We remember that a ship's company sailed with Drake from Plymouth and that Wolfe was not alone before Quebec: if Rhodes had his visions of the future, there were others, too, who dreamed their dreams: and Lord Lugard himself is, after all, but one of thousands who have worked for the success of our colonial administration in backward lands.

So ours is a democratic Empire both in its origin and its institutions—an Empire of the ordinary man, raised by common sense rather than resounding military achievements, and kept alive by agreement rather than by force. It has sought to preserve liberty, not in the brittle philosophic sense, but in the spheres where the citizen works and has his being. It has given equality, as far as the essential inequality of man allows, and it has conjured up a spirit of unity among races whom space and prejudice must otherwise have kept apart. In a world where the barriers between nations are becoming battlements, it has shown the way in which the individuality of races and co-operation between them may exist side by side. To-day, when the gospel of nationalism is at its climax, dictatorship a fashion and freedom apparently in decline, the Commonwealth stands amid the shrinking ranks of free peoples holding the principles of civilisation in trust for the future.

That democracy must revive is self-evident. Human ideals move forward spasmodically—but always forward. At intervals the jungle of intolerance and barbarism closes in and the advance slows down. Man turns aside to hack away the vicious growths and then, after a time, resumes his journey. Only the ignorant and naïve can believe that the end of the road of political progress lies in the cul-de-sac of the authoritarian state. For this cannot by its very nature be universal, and it is towards universality that mankind slowly moves. The recoil from freedom will at most be temporary, and the length of time it lasts rests in the hands of the nations which form the Imperial Commonwealth.

In our generation we have watched the decline and fall of another great international system. The dust

raised at the moment of its collapse has only just begun to settle and we begin to see the defects which led to disaster. First, there was no foundation of loyalty, and secondly, the League was an association based not on co-operation, but on force. Behind the soft draperies of the Covenant was the weapon of sanctions, and from the very beginning there were few who failed to realise that that weapon must eventually be used. We learned, too late, that collective security meant collective war, and that when any question of war arises, human associations are dissolved by the elementary requirements of security and self-interest.

But the Imperial Commonwealth has no sanction behind it: it seeks no compromise with force. Either its members reach an agreement voluntarily or the system fails. If a sanction exists, it is the knowledge that inflexibility and pettiness would force our relationship into dissolution, and that such a price would be too heavy for Great Britain or any of the Dominions to pay. While this contributes to its strength, it is also a possible source of weakness, for everything depends on the system remaining flexible. The tendency of every institution is to become rigid, and unless the Commonwealth is for ever prepared for change, it will be crushed by the pressure of events like a ship in an Arctic ice-pack.

The Roman Empire and its legatee, the medieval Catholic Church, give us a graphic warning of the dangers of rigidity in great institutions. Time and again in their history, they were threatened by rebellion and heresy—and time and time again the rebels and the heretics found themselves absorbed into the society at which they had struck. Thus St Francis became the father of the Church and Constantine an Emperor. But in the end both

institutions became static and their faiths faded. If Luther had preached in the fourteenth century instead of the sixteenth he might have ended as a saint instead of a schismatic: as it was, the Catholic Church could no longer stretch its broad limits any farther and the rebels were compelled to establish themselves outside.

In 1776 the Empire was faced with a similar problem. The Americans call the War of Independence the Revolutionary War and their term is characteristically more graphic than ours. Washington and Jefferson were essentially rebels against the colonial system. The time had come for an expansion of ideas. A little vision, a fleck of genius among the authorities at home, would have prevented the crisis. Unfortunately there was neither, and under the strain the system broke.

A second time, in 1837, the same situation arose. Fortunately on this occasion there were men with imagination. The second Empire was more flexible than the first. The rebels were absorbed, the crisis was met and overcome, and Canada, instead of following America out of the Empire, remained in it to become the great Dominion.

During the ninety years between 1837 and 1926, various conflicts of interest arose and subsided. The defeatism of the mid-nineteenth century was merged in the optimism of the 'seventies and 'eighties; the imperial horizon widened and changed; self-government became Dominion status; domination became consent; colonies became nations. Though reaction still lingered in the ante-room, there was statesmanship and foresight in the inner cabinet.

In those years imperial service claimed the best of a generation. It is no accident that Joseph Chamberlain,

the foremost statesman, chose the Colonial Office in preference to the Exchequer, or that Kipling, the most popular poet, used the imperial theme. Any man with ambition or energy turned to the Empire for a career or inspiration. There was a sense of spaciousness which the Elizabethans knew, but which we lack to-day. There might be murmuring in corners, but for the most part they went unheeded. Men felt the hand of Destiny upon them, and if to many the attitude of Providence to the Empire was mysterious, it at least had the virtue of being sure.

During the quarter-century before the Great War, Dominion nationalism and imperial unity grew side by side with astonishing vigour. Imperialists like Seddon and Laurier, who protested as loudly as their more extreme compatriots at any attempt by the Parliament at Westminster to interfere with the internal policies of their respective colonies, were at the same time strong for greater unity in the matters which affected all equally. Both these tendencies were tested by the War and both emerged triumphant. A change of emphasis, a series of necessary innovations, have obscured the essential similarity of post-War and pre-War imperial development. The Declaration of the 1926 Conference and the Statute of Westminster follow on logically from the growth of *Dominion nationalism in the earlier days*.

If 1931 saw the end of a period of change, it also inaugurated a new stage in the development of the Empire: and superficially there also began a new era of danger. The sprawling mass of the Imperial Commonwealth, vulnerable at a dozen points, held together by shadowy ties of sentiment, surrounded apparently by nations gazing upon it in salivacious anticipation like Alaric's Goths upon

the walls of Rome, might seem an object more for commiseration than for hope. There are many who vie with the pessimists of the eighteen-sixties and foretell the end in ponderous tones. They say that the people of Great Britain are too absorbed in European affairs to interest themselves in the remoter problems of the Commonwealth. Their horizon, which thirty years ago stretched to the ends of the earth, now goes scarcely farther than the Rhine. The period of expansion is over, they say; our virility declines; young men are unwilling to go abroad, while old men stir uneasily in their chairs, troubled by dreams of thirty years gone by—and through all this, the life of the Imperial Commonwealth moves slowly to its close.

But theirs is the voice of warning and not the voice of doom, and we should heed them, so that we may profit by their criticism and in the end condemn them out of their own mouths. There are dangers of aggression outside and decay within, but such is the characteristic of every great community. Both may be overcome. If it should mean sacrifice, our generation will not be the first from whom that has been demanded—or perhaps the last; for Fate is a broker, and to whom much is given, as much is demanded in return.

“A great Empire and little minds go ill together”, and if the Commonwealth is to continue, the first necessity is imagination and breadth of vision. The period of physical expansion is ended; there can be no more additions to our territory, but the history of the Commonwealth as an institution is scarcely ten years old.

It is in the realms of constructive politics that expansion in the future will take place. It may be that it will attract other democratic nations; others will join the British



group for purposes of trade, mutual protection, and the defence of common ideals. There are many countries to-day who would like to see their future associated with that of the Commonwealth, and should that ever come about, from it may spring a League of Nations, born not in the neurotic aftermath of war, but as an organic political growth, stable, unhurried, free.

If to-day we have an imperial dream, it does not consist of a vision of huge new territories added to the Crown by conquest or annexation, nor do we think in terms of power. We believe that the purpose of the Commonwealth is to provide an example to the world by its successful co-operation; and if we see it as Kipling did, in the form of "a semicircle of buildings and temples projecting into a sea—of dreams", at the same time we remember that those buildings must frequently be altered, that the vision must sometimes change, that each temple which gleams to-day must tarnish and be rebuilt—that the foundations alone can remain eternal.

APPENDIX I

STATUTE OF WESTMINSTER, 1931

(22 *Geo. V*, c. 4)

CHAPTER IV

**A**N Act to give effect to certain resolutions passed by Imperial Conferences held in the years 1926 and 1930.  
(11th December 1931)

Whereas the delegates of His Majesty's Governments in the United Kingdom, the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, the Irish Free State and Newfoundland, at Imperial Conferences holden at Westminster in the years of our Lord nineteen hundred and twenty-six and nineteen hundred and thirty did concur in making the declarations and resolutions set forth in the Reports of the said Conferences:

And whereas it is meet and proper to set out by way of preamble to this Act that, inasmuch as the Crown is the symbol of the free association of the members of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and as they are united by a common allegiance to the Crown, it would be in accord with the established constitutional position of all the members of the Commonwealth in relation to one another that any alteration in the law touching the Succession to the Throne or the Royal Style and Titles shall hereafter require the assent as well of the Parliaments of all the Dominions as of the Parliament of the United Kingdom:

And whereas it is in accord with the established constitutional position that no law hereafter made by the Parliament of the United Kingdom shall extend to any of the said Dominions as part of the law of that Dominion otherwise than at the request and with the consent of that Dominion:

And whereas it is necessary for the ratifying, confirming and establishing of certain of the said declarations and resolutions of the said Conferences that a law be made and enacted in due form by authority of the Parliament of the United Kingdom:

And whereas the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, the Irish Free State and Newfoundland have severally requested and consented to the submission of a measure to the Parliament of the United Kingdom for making such provision with regard to the matters aforesaid as is hereafter in this Act contained:

Now, therefore, be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1. In this Act the expression 'Dominion' means any of the following Dominions, that is to say, the Dominion of Canada, the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, the Irish Free State and Newfoundland.

2. (1) The Colonial Laws Validity Act, 1865, shall not apply to any law made after the commencement of this Act by the Parliament of a Dominion.

(2) No law and no provision of any law made after the commencement of this Act by the Parliament of a Dominion shall be void or inoperative on the ground that it is repugnant to the law of England, or to the provisions of any existing or future Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom, or to any order, rule or regulation made under any such Act, and the powers of the Parliament of a Dominion shall include the power to repeal or amend any such Act, order, rule or regulation in so far as the same is part of the law of the Dominion.

3. It is hereby declared and enacted that the Parliament of a Dominion has full power to make laws having extra-territorial operation.

4. No Act of Parliament of the United Kingdom passed after the commencement of this Act shall extend, or be deemed to extend, to a Dominion as part of the law of that Dominion,

unless it is expressly declared in that Act that that Dominion has requested, and consented to, the enactment thereof.

5. (Powers of Dominion Parliaments in relation to merchant shipping.)

6. (Powers of Dominion Parliaments in relation to Courts of Admiralty.)

7. (1) Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to apply to the repeal, amendment or alteration of the British North America Acts, 1867 to 1930, or any order, rule or regulation made thereunder.

(2) The provisions of section two of this Act shall extend to laws made by any of the Provinces of Canada and to the powers of the legislatures of such Provinces.

(3) The powers conferred by this Act upon the Parliament of Canada or upon the legislatures of the Provinces shall be restricted to the enactment of laws in relation to matters within the competence of the Parliament of Canada or of any of the legislatures of the Provinces respectively.

8. Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to confer any power to repeal or alter the Constitution or the Constitution Act of the Commonwealth of Australia or the Constitution Act of the Dominion of New Zealand otherwise than in accordance with the law existing before the commencement of this Act.

9. (1) Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to authorise the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia to make laws on any matter within the authority of the States of Australia, not being a matter within the authority of the Parliament or Government of the Commonwealth of Australia.

(2) Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to require the concurrence of the Parliament or Government of the Commonwealth of Australia in any law made by the Parliament of the United Kingdom with respect to any matter within the authority of the States of Australia, not being a matter within the authority of the Parliament or Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, in any case where it would have been in accordance with the constitutional practice existing before the commencement of this Act that the Parliament of the United Kingdom should make that law without such concurrence.

(3) In the application of this Act to the Commonwealth of Australia the request referred to in section four shall mean the request and consent of the Parliament and Government of the Commonwealth.

10. (1) None of the following sections of this Act, that is to say, sections two, three, four, five and six, shall extend to a Dominion to which this section applies as part of the law of that Dominion unless that section is adopted by the Parliament of the Dominion, and any Act of that Parliament adopting any section of this Act may provide that the adoption shall have effect either from the commencement of this Act or from such later date as is specified in the adopting Act.

(2) The Parliament of any such Dominion as aforesaid may at any time revoke the adoption of any section referred to in subsection (1) of this section.

(3) The Dominions to which this section applies are the Commonwealth of Australia, the Dominion of New Zealand and Newfoundland.

11. Notwithstanding anything in the Interpretation Act, 1889, the expression 'Colony' shall not, in any Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom passed after the commencement of this Act, include a Dominion or any Province or State forming part of a Dominion.

12. This Act may be cited as the Statute of Westminster, 1931.

## APPENDIX II

### NEWFOUNDLAND

THE natural peculiarities of the island must be remembered when trying to explain its peculiar political history. Though in area it is almost equal to England, its population numbers 282,000 people, 15 per cent of whom are illiterate. It has only one large town, St John's, and only two considerable industries, fishing and lumbering. It is not surprising, therefore, that the economic crisis, which shook profoundly the financial and political structure of the Mother Country, should have laid Newfoundland low.

She is the largest of the remnants of the old Empire and her people still retain much of the simplicity and hardihood of the Tudor and Stuart fishermen, who in the early years had sailed perilously to win their living on the Banks. She had been given self-government in 1855, when the Imperial Parliament was dispensing constitutions with unaccustomed generosity; and when nearly bankrupt forty years later, she had been refused admission to the Canadian Confederation, owing to the stupidity or lack of vision of Sir Mackenzie Bowell. Rebuffed, she had turned to work at her own destiny, and during the Great War, had given the Mother Country generous help out of all proportion to her size. Her representatives had been present at the post-War Imperial Conferences, but still considering herself as 'England's oldest colony' rather than the Commonwealth's smallest Dominion, she was inclined to be antagonistic to both her great neighbours, and very sensible of her attachments to Great Britain.

In spite of this, her connection with the United States was considerable. The Carnegie Fund had generously provided educational facilities for her people. Many young Newfoundlanders had gone to Boston to obtain employment, and American capital had been used to develop her timber and paper industries. She had gained one other thing from the

United States, and that was a corrupt political system. Between 1920 and 1932, her Budget had been unbalanced. In the latter year her debt stood at over \$100,000,000. The Government during the preceding years had spent money on unnecessary public works, and in the vivid words of the official report, "greed, graft, and corruption" had added to the troubles of the unhappy island. At the same time the fishing industry was meeting with growing competition from better equipped concerns in Iceland and Norway, and with that of other primary products, its world price was rapidly declining. By the winter of 1932, 25 per cent of the whole population were on relief, which consisted of rations in kind valued at not more than 4s. 3d. per head per month.

It was this situation into which the Amulree Commission was given the task of inquiring in 1933, and it was on its recommendation that the Newfoundland Parliament petitioned the King to suspend the Constitution and replace it by a Commission having full legislative powers, and consisting of three representatives from Great Britain and three from Newfoundland. The Mother Country took over responsibility for the finances of the island and paid part of its debts.

The new régime began with high hopes, but the difficulties which it had to overcome were enormous, and a bad fishing season prevented any immediate improvement in the economic situation. The Commission has, by means of the Salt Codfish Board, tried to organise the export trade of that all-important industry. Excessive expenditure has been stopped, but services of an educational and medical nature have been expanded. Co-operative buying and selling among each fishing community has been encouraged, and generally the Government has tried to procure a gradual and lasting improvement in the condition of the island.

The reversion of a self-governing colony, which had been represented at Imperial Conferences and mentioned in the Statute of Westminster, to the status of a Crown Colony by its own free will, is one of the more curious events of the history of the Commonwealth. The present Constitution is not intended to be permanent, and at the beginning of 1937 there was a petition for a return to self-government.

# APPENDIX III

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